HINDU VIEWS AND WAYS AND THE HINDU-MUSLIM INTERFACE

an anthropological assessment

Agehananda Bharati

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This book is the closest to a modern, critical, interdisciplinary answer to the oft-asked question "what is Hinduism?" The author does not claim to answer this question which he does not think can be answered unequivocally. Yet in this terse, succinct presentation something close to such answer has been attempted. The author analyzes both Hindu thought and Hindu behaviour as he approaches Hinduism both textually and contextually, as an indologist and a cultural anthropologist. He presents the average rural and urban Hindu views of the tradition rather than that of an intellectual or sacerdotal elite, and he introduces work-a-day people's way of acting as Hindus rather than the rituals or the meditations of highly tutored specialists, of the woman and the man in the field or in the office rather than of the purohita or shastri in the Vishvanath or Meenakshi temples. Bharati also clarifies a number of confusions which have become part of modernized Hindus' notions about ritual, caste, 'superstition' and other themes which the Hindu Renaissance of the last ten decades has generated.

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Rs. 30

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डाक्टर दिल्ली रमण रेग्मी, कल्याणी रेग्मी स्मारक पुस्तकालय

by

Agehananda Bharati

Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

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First Published 1981

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Published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110055, Printed by Print India, A-38/2 Mayapuri Phase-I, New Delhi-110064

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Preface

This little book is written for two rather large, yet somewhat specific audiences. Primarily, it is meant for an Indian readership, for people in South Asia in general, who are concerned about problems of objective as against enthusiastic or antagonistic representations. Secondarily, it is meant for western audiences that want to know about Indian religious behavior not as it is supposed to be, but as it is. Audiences in both India and the West have, during the past nine decades, read the works of well-meaning, but unobjective authors like Swami Vivekananda and other monk-writers of the Hindu Renaissance. I am not presenting this to indologists, Sanskritists, or Islamicists, since hardly anything I will say here is new to them, if they have familiarized themselves with some of the basic, recent anthropological and sociological writings about Indian religion—such as the important works of Surajit Sinha, T.N. Madan, M.N. Srinivas, the late Iravati Karve and E. Harper, to mention only some of the most outstanding. Those scholars who are interested in and equipped for texts rather than contexts, will, of course, recognize the family resemblance between those authors and what I have presented here.

It is an anthropological assessment, as the subtitle of the work indicates. This is important for an Indian readership that is acquainted with my textual writings. As an anthropologist, I am doffing my monastic robes for the duration of such work. I regard myself as a committed Hindu—which really need not be said for any one who knows the meaning of membership in the sannyasi order of monks. But over the past two decades, people have been puzzled, especially in India, about my critique, or what might read like a critique, of Hinduism. But this is essential. A modern mind must be able to operate on several levels-not of course at the same time, but at different times. What is presented here, rests on observation and on the analysis of observation, not on religious experience and conviction.

One cannot talk about Hindu and Muslim behavior without talking about the theoretical and socially operative arrangements of Indian society in *varṇa* and *jāti*. Official Indian antagonism against the sociological-anthropological study of India would be allayed if it were realized that talking about caste does in no way imply supporting or defending it. Indians, Pakistanis, and Ceylonese, when travelling and living in the West, tend to tell westerners when quizzed by them about caste, that "caste has been abolished." This statement cannot even be made in an Indian language, and paraphrases like "the discrimination on the basis of caste should be abolished" or "there is potent legislation against untouchability" may be laudable and true, but they don't translate "caste has been abolished," because it hasn't, and because 'caste' and 'abolish' have totally different meanings for untutored, western audiences.

Purveyors of text and purveyors of context have been at loggerheads with each other for a long time, but there may be an end in sight. At academies like Chicago, Wisconsin, and at the London School of Oriental Studies, to mention but the most influential, indologists and social scientists have begun to realize that they can no longer ignore each other. Indologists and orientalists in general are realizing that books of India or of China, or of the Arabs are not all there is, or was, to the Indian, the Chinese, the Arabs. On the other side, social scientists realize that kinship terminology, synchronic studies and observation of economic or political or religious behavior cannot generate any satisfactory understanding of peoples with a literate history. Studying American Indians is not the same as studying Indian Indians—hard-nosed anthropological oldtimers' views notwithstanding, there *is* more to be known and more to be studied about the latter—to be precise, exactly as much more as there is due to the literate template of India.

This booklet is such an attempt at approaching things textually and contextually, even though, by the nature of the author's intention, the style is contextual, anthropological rather than indological. The target audience is Indian, but this fact should make it eminently important for western students of Indian religious behavior, since by and large western audiences apart from indologists have not been given much aid by polarized statements. Hinduism as popularly stated by Radhakrishnan or earlier by Vivekananda, or even Hinduism as learnedly stated by S.N. Dasgupta or Jan Gonda is not the Hinduism of Hindu people, but it is the normative Hinduism of a small elite, traditional or modern. On the other hand, sociological and anthropological accounts of Hindu behavior ever reached an audience outside the anthropological and sociological ambience.

In order to provide some remedy, or at least some amelioration for this deficiency, I have tried to present the cognitive and the conative constituents of

Hinduism today, of the religious thought and behavior of rural and urban average Hindus rather than of pandits or of modern Hindu apologetics, of the unpremeditated, un-selfconscious Hindu views and ways of what will be about one-fourth of humanity by the turn of the century.

The plan of the volume is self-evident. Still, the choice of what might seem to be a somewhat specialized segment of Hindu thought and action, viz., the chapter on Śaṃkaracarya and the goddess needs a short justification. The late Richard Robinson of the University of Wisconsin used to say in his lectures commencing his courses that there were, in theory, two ways of tackling a very large subject like Buddhism (or Hinduism) : you either encircle the subject with your forces and press in toward the center, gradually eliminating the obstacles; or else you use the parachute-drop strategy: you land a limited number of elite troups somewhere near the center of the target and fan out from there, trusting the centrality of your drop location to compensate for the small size of your troups. I always found this strategic model very helpful. In order to 'encircle' Hindu ways and views, I would need an army of libraries and disciplines. But for the parachute drop into Hinduism, I need what is, for this book's purpose, available to me: an assessment of what is crucially illustrative of Hindu ways, a paradigm that englobes highly contrastive themes within a seemingly boundless tradition. Śaṃkaracārya's *devibhakti* aspect seemed to me the best of some possible choices. It can generate, I believe, a firmer grasp of those contrasts which are either inexplicable or disturbing, or of course both, to the self-conscious Hindu or to the student of Hinduism.

Damage is being done by well-meaning, but ill-informed promulgators of Hindu ideas, in India and abroad, who seek to simplify matters in order to find a formula. They are asked, and hence ask the question "What is Hinduism." I do not think the question can be asked, nor that it should be asked. The desire to answer it invariably leads to bowdlerization and inadmissible oversimplification. As readers will glean right at the beginning of the text, things are different in Hinduism from Islam or Christianity, where the question can indeed be asked and answered in aphorismic brevity, without necessary oversimplification. It is not a facetious suggestion that the question that should be asked ought to be "what is Hinduism not ?"

I wrote this little work without any particular team or personnel collaboration. Messrs. Munshiram Manoharlal are pioneers in bibliophile outreach in India and the West, and it seemed to me that they would be the test carriers for a critical as well as an involved message of this sort. I am concerned, both as a scholar and as a committed Hindu, at the *laissez-faire* atmosphere prevailing in Hinduism-made-easy talk and writing, and though I do not propose to pose or answer the "what is Hinduism" query, I do here suggest some ideas on what sort of questions could be asked, and answered, for any and by a wide audience which espouses sober, critical, and sympathetic analysis.

Agehānanḍa Bhāraṭi

Delhi, January 1981,

CHAPTER 1

Hindu Views of Life

A Muslim or a Christian scholar might talk about 'the Muslim view of life' or 'the Christian view of life' without talking trivia. Such use of the singular for Hinduism is quite impossible. For whatever view there may be that is really common to all Hindus, is complex and somewhat fuzzy. If there is a common cognitive denominator in any religion-based world view, it must be of a discursive kind. I once asked a Hindu lady doctor what made a Hindu a Hindu,in her view; she said "every good man is a Hindu." We shall have to return to this kind of statement in a while. Such and similar statements invite some sort of moral approval, a nod of consent, a deep breath of sympathetic recognition, and it generates a good number of cliches—the cliches Hindu swamis in India and abroad have been living by for several lucrative decades.

In the case of Christianity and Islam, such a common-denominator statement seems possible without the moralistic trivialization exemplified just above. Thus (with the exception of Unitarians), all Christians believe in the divinity of the man Christ; and all Muslims believe in the absolute sovereignty of a creator god, who does not tolerate any partners; *śirk*, the setting up of partners for Allah is the most heinous heresy in Islam.

Hinduism posits a much subtler, for less accessible, and somewhat intransigent criterion as denominator. While all Christians and Muslims would agree to the above statement, not all Hindus would agree to the one minimal common denominator there is—the acceptance of the Veda as having the same epistemological power of proof (*pramāṇa*) as direct perception and deductive inference.

Yet, this is precisely the only common minimal denominator of all forms of the total Hindu belief system. The Vedas, the body of the most ancient collection of Indian hymns, composed in the Vedic language, the precursor of Sanskrit, by priestly poets of the early Indian Aryans, then handed down from father to son, or from teacher to disciple, contain the canonical part of the Hindu scriptures. Handed down in four sections, i.e., the *Ṛgveda* (a collection of hymns inviting the deities to participate in or otherwise interact with the sacrifice), the *Sāmaveda* (an excerpt of the Ṛgvedic hymns set to liturgical modes, thus providing the root for Indians music), the *Yajurveda* (i.e., a further large collection of hymns, eulogies, incantations, and invocations to be used during rituals pertaining to virtually all walks of life), and the *Atharvaveda* (a final collection of incantations and spells, with a certain number of coercive formulae used for all sorts of manipulation of extrahuman entities), form the core of the canonical corpus. In addition to these texts (which, in size, would equal roughly one volume of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), there are extensive manuals for the brahmins (ritualistic specialists, priests, called the *Brāhmaṇas*, and finally a much smaller collection of books, called the 'forest books' (*āraṇyakas*) and the 'private teachings'

(*Upaniṣads*), which contain the speculative, philosophical, metaphysical, and the incipiently esoteric interpretations of the Vedas. Apart from the Ārya Sāmajists, a fundamentalist sect founded by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati about a hundred years ago, all Hindus who know about the constituents of the Vedic literature include the Upaniṣads in 'that which is heard' (*śruti*). All other religious texts—and their number is legion—are referred to as 'that which is remembered' *smṛti*, i.e., the genealogies and histories of gods and ancient royalty, cosmology and cosmogony, and probably the entire bulk of ancient Indian mythology, are contained in the eighteen *Purāṇas* ("old tales") in the two great Indian Epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, relating the deeds of Ramachandra, the royal incarnation of the universal deity Viṣṇu, and the *Mahābhārata*, the epic of two feuding houses of royal kinsmen. This latter work contains the famous *Bhagavadgītā*, well known by now in the West through numerous translations. It, like all other *smṛti* texts, is not canonical—i.e., their messages are hortative, but do not have to be accepted by a practising Hindu; they may be rejected if, and only if, one sees a conflict between them and the *śruti*.

So much for the formal view common to all Hindus; but less than five per cent of all Hindus ever knew these texts even by name, and much less than one per cent knew even parts of their content. A section of the male members of the priestly caste, the brahmins, did and do commit certain Vedic texts to memory—hymns for the life cycle rituals, marriage, childbirth, and investiture of "twice-born" boys with the holy thread, i.e., the male initiation ceremony of the Hindu social elite. Vedic scholars were usually brahmins, highly respected for their scholarship. Until quite recently, and in the more orthodox deep South of India, women were not allowed to study or chant the Veda, nor was the majority population of the subcontinent, i.e., all people designated as not belonging to the 'twice-born' castes.

It must be kept in mind, at this point and henceforward, that the term 'Hindu' is a term of social identification. Sociologically speaking, a person is a Hindu simply because he or she was born into an endogamous segment of Hindu society, and he or she does not have to do anything about it, nor think or believe any specific teaching. So far as we know, the people of India have always interacted as endogamous groups, (*jāti*) and this is what is meant by 'caste' in India. It is dealt with in much greater detail in the chapter on Hindu Ways of Life. These are some three thousand or more such endogamous groups in India. Parallel to these, and partially overlapping, there are the four normative, literary, theoretical *varṇa-s*, i.e., the scriptural groupings of Hindu society into four types, i.e., the priest-scholars (brahmins), the royal, military, landholding patrons (*kṣattrīyas*), the mercantile or commercial elite (*vaiśyas*), and the menial workers (farmers, craftsmen etc.,) or *śūdras*. Outside these four stipulated sections, there is the very large, heterogeneous assemblage of people the texts refer to as *pañcama*, 'the fifth,' who do not belong into this fourfold scheme. It is these to whom the much later terms 'untouchable,' 'outcaste' etc., apply. It is important to keep in mind that the fourfold scheme is *theoretical*—it is not and never was a social reality. By sociological definition, to be Hindu means to be born into a Hindu *jāti*; and sociologically, this is a sufficient definition for a Hindu, with no belief or ideological component being part of that definition. The intricate pervasion of this sociological with the ritualistic realm of Hinduhood is presented in more detail in the chapter on Hindu ways of life.

Here, however, we are talking about Hindu *views* of life, i.e., about the world view, and the cosmological view, and the view of man in the cognitive map of people who call themselves Hindu. A final caveat again: if a man says 'I am a Christian,' the implication is that he holds certain beliefs which he thinks define him as a Christian; but when a man says "I am a Hindu," this does not necessarily imply *any* belief element, since he may (and, unless he finds himself in a situation where ideas are what is being asked) make this statement in a sociological sense, as a statement of ethnic and cultural reference and identification.

What a person does mean, when asked what he or she thinks, or does, or ought to as a Hindu, is the proper topic of this chapter, and now only can we proceed to talk about Hindu views of life.

On the level of the rural grassroots—and this is still the level of the absolute majority by a long shot, we would expect a relatively simple perception comparable, say, to the notions of a Bedouin about Islam, or a Sicilian farmer about Roman Catholicism. Not so-even on this level we find a staggered, overlapping set of cognitions: staggered, because the village specialists (brahmin *pūjāris* or Sanskrit ritual practitioners, usually full-time, the occasional *vaid* of traditional diagnostician-physician, and a large typology of *ojhās*,shamans, non-brahmin practitioners etc.,) and the village population display a very wide gamut of familiarity with religious things. This familiarity tends to be represented in leaps, with most villagers knowing little to very little of the religious grassroot traditions, the various specialists knowing very much more. Overlapping on the upper, i.e., brahmin specialist end, with the literary Hindu tradition seeping through a one-directional flow from the cities and holy places into the villages. The agents of this diffusion are the brahmin and related practitioners in the village; the itinerant *sadhus* (holy men, monks), and increasingly since the turn of the century, printed material and now the media (radio, movies—the latter with a very high percentage of *dhārmik*, i.e., religious-lore themes). Since to the anthropologist religion is the manipulation of culturally stipulated extra-human beings, all people in the village practice religion. The fulltime-ritualistic specialist, the brahmin *purohit* (*pūjāri*, i.e., ritualist), apart from conducting most of the life cycle and crisis rituals for his co-villagers, also feeds them some of the basic tenets of Hindu doctrine. The very large number of non-literate practitioners (shamans, curers, etc.) assimilate a part of the great tradition Sanskritic lore, but practice their "own localized" rituals, appeasing, controlling, cajoling, or ejecting the spirits, demons, minor godlings, witches, etc., which threaten the village and its individuals at all times. To the rest of the village community, these practitioners and their partially overlapping lore, as well as the itinerant agents from larger places, communicate the elements which constitute the Hindu villagers' world view.

Quite unique to India is the process whereby local, "little tradition" spirits, ritualistic actions, gods, goddesses etc., tend to be identified with "great traditions" foci. We refer to this trend as *universalization*, which is a more general term for Sanskritization. Sanskritization, to all social scientists concerned with India, means the acceptance of or assimilation to rituals and belief systems contained in the religious literature in Sanskrit—Sanskrit being to Hinduism roughly what Latin was to the Roman Catholics until Vatican II. The lower strata of Hindu society make steps toward Sanskritization either gradually or quite fast; their purpose is not primarily the acquisition of an improved type of religious knowledge, but social and economic advancement. Much more is said about this in the chapter on Hindu ways of life—here, we must concentrate on the views of the world generated during the process of Sanskritization. Let me illustrate universalization, or Sanskritization, by a very simple, very typical example: in a large number of villages in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, villagers fear and worship a goddess by the name of Śitalā. She is the goddess of smallpox, and she is in every way incharge of this one-time epidemic disease. She withholds it and dispenses it, depending on ritualistic observances done or omitted. Her shrines are usually quite small, and hardly visible to the outsider who happens to pass through the village. Her priests are non-brahmins, shaman-type lowcaste men, who mediate between her and the villagers. But to the outside world, as well as in the constant dialectic that goes on between the brahmin specialists in the village, their villagers, and the practitioner of Śitalā worship, Śitalā is explained as the local form of the great universal mother-goddess, the Goddess Kālī, Durgā, Pārvatī, as Śakti or the primordial energy, or with any other names or forms of the mother-goddess of the 'great-tradition'

Sanskrit lore. This is quite conscious homology. There are thousands of cross-cultural analogues: Maria Ilonza, a Venezuelan Indian goddess of the sea, is partly identified with the Holy Virgin, to wit her *praenomen* Maria. In the religious dialectic surrounding the local goddess Śitalā, we hear statements like "the universal goddess of the Veda (*Jagadaṁbā*) has benign and terrying aspects; in the same way, Śitalā is both benign and terrible; she is to us villagers what Durgā is to the learned priests in Bengal.

Conversely, 'great tradition' elements—divinities and rituals which filter from the cities, the great national shrines, and the books to the village—by whatever channels (wondering monks, brahmins, and more recently, the mythological movies), tend to be assimilated downward, as it were, to the local shrines, the local gods, the village tutelary deity(*ḍih*)—so that the village god whose simple shrine, consisting perhaps of a stone wrapped in a piece of cloth, with simple oblations and libations given to him by the villagers and their part-time religious specialists (not brahmins, but shamans, lowcaste practitioners), is said to be the local form of Śiva, the world mother, Viṣṇu, Hanumān, or another 'great-tradition' Hindu deity. Anthropologists call this process *parochialization*[1]—it is the obverse of universalization and Sanskritization.

The belief content of the villagers is metaphysically simple, but mythologically quite complex. In fact, the village mythological lore is often more involved than the more philosophical 'great-tradition' Hinduism of the cities and the books. Shorn of the local mythology, the mythic-folkloristic legendary explaining the origin of the people of the village, its castes, etc., we can discern certain themes shared by Hindus all over the subcontinent and beyond India in the areas of Hindu migration (Fiji, the Caribbean, East and South Africa). These are the salient shared perceptions: the universe is permeated by an enormous power; everything in the universe is suffered by, or part of that power. It takes on millions of forms, some benevolent, some malevolent, some neutral. The potentially malevolent forms are the demons, the mischievous souls of some departed—local spirits, witches, etc.,—must be watched with great caution or precaution, they are easily annoyed and cause harm. Great saints and scholars are thought to have access to the universal being. The villagers can only listen to what holy men tell them about it, but the locality has to take care of the more immediately present forces. What happens to people is the cumulative result of many spiritual forces. If a man's children die, a relative gets sick, the animals do not prosper, the cause is always of an extrahuman nature. It is either a curse, inflicted by some witch male or female, or it is some god who was slighted or who is angry for reasons of his or her own; or it is the effect of one's bad deeds in previous lives. At this point it cannot be stressed strongly enough, that the 'great-tradition' notion of *karma*, so well known and so much marvelled about by literate people i.e., the law of retribution through one's own actions in past lives, is neither the only nor even the most important causal agent for sorrowful events. It is either one or more of these factors. In addition, very much to the chagrin of Hindu purists, most North Indian villages also add fate (*taqdīr*) as a possible causal factor. The term is Arabic, the notion is Muslim in its provenience, and there is nothing in written, 'great-tradition' Hinduism that would have given rise to this notion; but regardless of it, due to the long symbiosis with Islam, a very large portion of India's Hindu villagers take fate, somehow ordained by the universal power, as an etiology on a par with *karma*, witches, curses, angry godlings, etc.

Human beings can, in theory at least, so the villager muses, achieve a state of bliss and power and closeness to, even oneness with that universal being—such are the yogis, seers, holy men about whom the scriptures speak, and about whom the wandering sadhus, the priests, and other tellers of holy tales talk in the village. The earthly representatives of the impersonal power, manifested as the great personally conceived gods are the people to be really worshipped, their command and their help should be sought, and as much as possible their ways should be emulated. Those very few who succeed in such noble attempts, will reach lofty states. All others will be reborn millions of times, and their fortunes will be largely decided by their actions in the present life. The villagers do not feel cognitive dissonance in holding such contrasting views simultaneously.

This sums up what is common, by way of belief, to almost all Hindu villagers. But this is about all. Notions about purity and pollution are so entirely dissimilar from Judaeo-Christian notions that special stress has to be given to the contrast. Whereas in the Judaeo-Christian notion purity and pollution refer to a moral universe of discourse, the Hindu notion rests entirely on ritualistic and mechanical types of contact. Meat, alcohol, and sexual contact with persons of a markedly lower class status, as well as occupations that have to do with polluting elements like leather, hair, dirt, etc., cause pollution which is transmitted through kinship and contact. On the grassroots level, moral concerns are left to the consensus of society. Morality is legislated by convention, not by religious conscience. The prime motivation toward ethical behavior, and the prime prophylactic against unethical comportment are the gossip lines, local traditions of what is proper, and the notion of *izzat* (honor), all of which have secular rather than religious sources.

The chasm between the grassroots "little tradition" described so far and the Hinduism of the learned Hindus, of the brahmins and others who interpret and continue the tradition on a highly literate level, in Sanskrit and in their vernacular is very deep indeed. I refer to this group as 'grassroots great tradition Hindus.' Their world view is complex, sophisticated, though not critical in the western analytical sense of the word. It is a non-historical view, cyclical, not linear like the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim world view. The universe is eternal, without beginning and without end (*anādi-ananta*) in this sophisticated Hindu view, unlike the Judaeo-Christina-Islamic sempiternality, where the universe is created out of nothing by a creator god: a notion rejected as totally absurd by grassroots "great tradition" Hinduism. The universe is permeated by, supported by, and eternally witnessed by the *brahman*, the universal, intelligent, formless essence. The key term *brahman* is grammatically neutral (it is not connected, semantically, with either the word *brāhmaṇa* for the person of the brahmin caste, nor with the god Brahmā, the demiurge male divinity whose function is exhausted by the act of manifesting things and forms out of the formless).

The grassroots "great tradition" specialists (brahmins, sadhus), communicate the essential content of these doctrine to the lay population, mainly to the women, but increasingly to the total urban population, through such continuous religious performance as the *kathā*, (religious instruction), *kīrtan* (religious litany), and simply through generalized instruction. In the instructional content, there is a considerable difference in the cities of Hindu India, between various religious traditions. The difference is marked, for instance, in the area of the Indian capital, where the majority follows a conservative, syncretistic kind of Hinduism which accepts a very large number of religious tenets from both canonical and non-canonical scriptures. In contrast, the followers of the Ārya Samāj profess a fundamentalistic, back to the Veda type monotheism. The grassroots "great tradition" views can be summarized as follows:

God has somehow generated this universe, in a cyclical fashion, without beginning and without end, but in a sequence of cycles which are eternally repetitive. Four world ages constitute such a cycle; the golden age (*kṛtayuga*), the slightly less golden second age (*tretayuga*), the third or declining age (*dvāparayuga*), and finally the deadly, wicked, sinful age of corruption and decline (*kaliyuga*), in which we now live. At the end of this four-fold cycle, the entire universe will be swallowed into the invisible divine system, and generated again in due course. The underlying attitude is highly pantheistic. The godhead permeates all that lives from inert matter, through amoeba, gnats and insects, the animal kingdom, through the human reaches, to gods and demons. All these beings, billions and billions settling a universe recreated in a cyclical fashion, are in a state of bondage. But bondage means ignorance. Ignorance is the basis of sin. Quite unlike in the Judaeo-Christian religions, it is knowledge that makes free, not devotion, piety, good works, and the good life.

The knowledge which liberates has nothing to do with gaining information, with academic learning, or with any kind discursive knowing. Rather, it is the irrefutable intuition of the ultimate truth of oneness; the person who gains this perfect wisdom or knowledge no longer identifies with his or her body, mind, individuality, soul, society, etc., but with the divine essence underlying all and everything, the animate as well as the inanimate universe. True knowledge means intuitive, irremovable intuition of one's true nature, which is divine—not as a reflection of divinity, a mirror image of God as in the Christian notion, but divine as exclusive of any other accretion. Divinity, the impersonal absolute (*brahman*) is thus in reality one and the same as what was considered to be the individual self (*ātman*).

The above is a statement of the monistic schools of thought; these have retained the highest prestige in the realm of religious thought in India over several millennia. It is not, and was never held by the majority of the Hindu population, not even by the majority of the learned Hindu specialist through the ages. Hindus other than the monists believe in a differential grade of proximity to the divine, and in less impersonal conceptions of godhead. We have a continuum representing the entire spectre of Hindu religious views: on one end, there are those who believe that divinity, though immaterial and abstract, manifests itself in thousands of divine forms, for the benefit of the world and its denizens, because there are as many different types of minds and perceptions as there are different faces. Some can meditate on the divine as abstract and in terms of essential oneness with their own being; others must distantiate the divine in those forms upon which they *can* meditate, to which they can devote themselves, and through which they can find that knowledge or intuition which would set them free. Now it is on this level that the ideological contrast works—followers of each idea, i.e., from the most personalistic to the totally abstract claim that *their* way constitutes the highest knowledge, and that the others are markers on the road to perfection. There is little tolerance on this level of grassroots sophistication: the monist holds that all other people, through effort and practice of their own, must eventually come around to the monistic view of total oneness; the dualist and the devotee believes that monists will come around to the personalistic experience in the end.

Whatever the view of Hindus, virtually all of them worship divinities or at least one divinity of the enormous Hindu pantheon. Yet it would be inaccurate and misleading to call this polytheism, simply because Hindus—of any degree of theological sophistication or simplicity—believe that the god or goddess they worship is just an aspect of the cosmic being, which congeals, so to speak, into an anthropomorphic form for the benefit of this specific devotee. When quizzed, Hindus of all levels will say that they are aware of the narrowness of their particular approach, and that their own experience will be closer to ultimate reality as they progress.

While all agree that supreme knowledge is ultimately the most desirable object of human life, very few actually follow a path that would lead them there directly. There is the well known notion of rebirth, and rebirth is seen simply as the apparatus whereby beings—all beings–work their way up toward the supreme actualization of divinity. But en route to this end, human life is seen as having four graded, continuous modes or purposes: the conventionally permitted degree of quest for pleasure and sensual fulfillment (*kāma*), the pursuit of social status and wealth (*artha*), the pursuit of ritualistic and other duties prescribed for the various segments of society and for the various stages of life, charity, and the good life in a moral sense (*dharma*); finally, the quest for freedom, emancipation, supreme knowledge (*mokṣa*). The individual stages of life are seen as (to the higher castes at least), studenthood (*brahmacarya*), householder-citizenship, the family life of the married man (*gṛhastha*), the gradual detachment from worldly affairs (*vānaprastha*). and finally the state of the homeless mendicant (*sannyāsa*). These are purely theoretical, and hardly anyone in India has followed these four successive stages during the last 2000 years. Men become monks, if they do, from any of the stages of life in fact, some of the most highly respected monastic teachers and religious leaders in Hindu history took monastic orders in early adolescence. Yet these stages and their respective aims are recognized and frequently quoted by Hindus.

The methods leading to ultimate knowledge are, of course, contained in the over-arching bracket term *yoga*. Yoga does not mean physical exercises or any calisthenics for health and beauty, but any method of contemplation which aims at detaching the practitioner from his or her innate and erroneous notions of physical, social, and other empirical identities, and the realization of their divine status. People who actually follow such a method are referred to by many different names as yogis, sadhus (holy men), and though tradition stresses that no monastic orders are necessary for such quest, the historical fact is that most seekers embraced some type of monastic organization or another. If they did continue to live within the family, they were given special privileges of distance and non-involvement. The status of the holy man, by whatever term he is referred to, is very high indeed in modern Hindu India as it was in old times, regardless of whether modern Hindus admit this or not.

We finally turn to a numerically small, but functionally extremely important segment of the Hindu population and their worldview. They are the 'modern,' i.e., English-speaking urbanites of India. They are the people who 'run' India on most levels of politics and economics--and their fathers were the people who inaugurated and consummated the Indian freedom struggle. Gandhi, Nehru, the professionals, journalists, urban importers, etc., all these are what I call the Renaissance Hindus.[2] They are setting the style and the mode for modern Hinduism, and possibly for all Hindu beliefs of the foreseeable future, not because of their number which hardly accounts for 2% of the total Hindu population, but because they operationalize the official culture. Westerners who are not scholars of Hinduism get their knowledge of Hinduism entirely through these people, since they are the only ones who communicate in English, either written or spoken. They are also the steering agents for formal education on all levels; school texts for all grades are prepared and sanctioned by this segment, by their educational officers and spokesmen. The kind of Hinduism they espouse, the value orientations, the beliefs they hold are bound to constitute official Hinduism for the future. What are the views of the urban Hindus?

There are three themes which make official, urban Hinduism something rather different from both the grassroots village and the grassroots learned Hinduism. First, official Hinduism is highly puritanical; second, it is anti-ritualistic; and third, it tends to augment its tenets and its practices by what I call the 'pizza-effect'.[3] Let me deal with these three underlying themes one by one, and then conclude by describing the articles of faith of the modern urban Hindus.

Urban Hinduism is puritanical, in that it looks with deep suspicion on any hedonistic pursuit, and on any life-style which inculcates the sensuous and the aesthetic. Whenever students go to visit India, I warn them not to confuse India with Khajuraho, Konarak, and the other scores of exquisite erotic sculpture on Hindu temples, nor with the sophisticated erotic literature of classical Hindu India: those days are gone. For the last three centuries, Hinduism has extruded from itself all reference to, and all religious uses of sensuality that had been one of its hallmarks in its heydays. The reasons for this are numerous and complex, and not within the purview of this essay.[4] Present remonstrances by urban Hindus denying puritanism on the grounds that Hindus are sexually overproductive, are quite childish: puritanism has never prevented people from producing large numbers of children. The notion that sex pollutes, that dalliance and its aesthetic corollaries are 'materialistic' and nonspiritual, and that sexual acts are basically shameful, is deeply ingrained and belongs to the official culture of modern, urban Hinduism. The preservation of semen is thought to be the *sine qua non* for spiritual purity and power. It is for this reason that the holy man, the sadhu, is admired or feared, and that his claim to a special, trans-social status is enforced and perpetuated. When M.N. Roy, one of the foremost political thinkers of pre-Independence India, asked Mahatma Gandhi what he thought about temple walls with erotic sculptures, he said 'if I had the power, I would tear them down'.

Modern urban Hinduism is anti-ritualistic: it tends to call all ritualistic action, with the possible, oftentimes begrudged exception of such socially unavoidable rites as weddings, the initiation of highcaste boys (*upanayana*), and funerals, *superstitions*. Minimal ritual such as enjoined by Swami Dayananda and other Hindu reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is exempted by their followers, and ignored by others. But the pervasive presence of Hindu ritual in the village, at home, and among the 'uneducated' (meaning all people who do not know English), is scoffed at. Since most of the urban Hindus' parents, grandparents, village relatives, and city women still adhere to ritual, there is embarrassment about its presence.

Since the pizza-effect ascent of the swamis from the time of Swami Vivekananda onward to this day, and the fabulous appeal they have been making in the West and to westernized Hindus, a special brand of simplified belief system, articulated by the swamis who speak English, and by their western and Indian followers, has become the official Hindu belief system.[5] It is to this we can now briefly turn:

All good and moral people are Hindus, regardless of their birth. A Hindu is a person who worships God, does his duty in the world, does not believe in caste by birth, but rather by his or her own moral achievements, and by personal piety. All that a Hindu should know is contained in the *Bhagavadgītā*, explained by intelligent, scientifically inclined sadhus and pious laymen. God is one, but he can be worshipped in many forms, the forms presented in such holy books as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or in the incarnate forms of such powerful holy men as Sri Aurobindo, Sathya Sai Baba, Ramakrishna Paramahaṁsa, Swami Vivekananda etc. Hinduism is tolerant. All other religions teach the same truth, regardless of whether they call it God, Allah, Krishna, etc. A person who does his duty to society, believes in God, and does not hurt other people, is on the way to perfection. Should he want to be perfect and free, he can also espouse such supererogatory means as *yoga*, which is the generic term for any sort of spiritual exercise taught by good gurus or gleaned from the *Bhagavadgītā*. Such a person may be a *karma-yogi*, if he does his social and professional work with a spirit of renunciation, offering the fruits of his effort to God. He may be a *jñāna-yogi*, or a seeker of wisdom through religious thinking, rejecting worldly things although surrounded by them, like the proverbial royal swan who reportedly separates the milk out of a mixture of milk and water (bad news for the Indian milkman). He may be a *bhakta*, i.e., one who devotes himself humbly and piously and constantly to the form of God (*iṣṭa*) of his choice. He may very rarely be a full time yogi, following one of the difficult meditational disciplines handed down from times immemorial. The consummation of all of these life styles is *mukti*, freedom from attachment, and theologically seen freedom from rebirth, which is the result of attachment.

Modern urban Hindus believe that Hinduism, unlike other religions, is *scientific*, i.e., that it stands the tests of modern science, and claim that science had been first invented many thousand years ago in India. The atomic bomb, the aeroplane, all sorts of astounding armament, all of these are documented in the Veda and in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Due to the general deterioration of morals and to the invasion of foreigners, India lost the ancient sciences of her past. Some foreigners, especially the Germans[6] somehow purloined the Vedic sciences, giving the West its latter-day technological superiority.

Modern urban Hindus, unless they happen to be trained historians or social scientists etc., also think that the age of the Vedas is in the vicinity of twenty-thousand years; and of the Epics close to that. The un- and anti-historical attitude of modern Hindus is shared by Hindus in the diaspora (Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean), and more recently by western converts to various forms of neo-Hinduism.

Quite recently, say, beginning with the late fifties, urban Hindus have displayed an increasing interest in a large number of charismatic neo-Hindu movements. This is partly due to the pizza effect no doubt; but it is also due to the media avalanche felt in urban India. Holy men, saints and magicians, assorted sadhus and itinerant religious—have highly effective means of communicating their presence, and the *propaganda fidei*, say of the followers of Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, or of the late Sri Aurobindo, is no second to that of Reverend Moon or Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the West. I project that it is through the instrumentality of these religious specialists, the gurus and swamis, that some degree of ritualization will be reintroduced into urban Hindu India in the next decades. There is, at this point, a cognitive dissonance: on the one hand, modern urban Hindus reject ritualism and affective involvement with tradition as 'superstitious'; on the other, they are increasingly aware of the esteem and the power centered on the new religious specialists, the English-speaking sadhus and their wide and variegated following. Whether this dissonance is going to last, or to be resolved in some sort of new Hindu syncretism, remains to be seen.

REFERENCES

[1] The terms Sanskritization, universalization, parochialization, modernization, etc., are found in all the works of McKim Marriott and Milton Singer—see *bibliography*.

[2] See my article "The Hindu Renaissance and its Apolopetic Patterns" —see *bibliography*.

[3] Before the turn of the century, the pizza was the simple, unleavened hot bread, the staple for the farmers in Sicily and Calabria, the South Italian areas from which virtually all American Italians came. Before that time the pizza was not known outside that area, and in other parts of Italy the pizza was looked down upon as the food for country bumpkins. In the American habitat, however, the pizza was embellished by many additions and in the early decades of this century, it returned to Italy where it became a highly respected, popular, all-Italian article of food. Analogously, many cultural items (yoga, Hindu teachings, Indian dance etc.) were thought to be unworthy and inutile by urban Hindus until

these goods acquired name and fame in the West, through such agents of the Hindu Renaissance as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, etc., and they are now sought out, respected, and absorbed into modern urban Hindu ways. The most recent example is the Satyajit Ray movie trilogy (*Pather Panchali*, *Aparajita*, *The World of Apu*); they were complete flops in India until they became famous in the West; at this time, these movies are shown and highly acclaimed in India—through the pizza-effect, thus outlined.

[4] See my *Tantric Tradition* and *Light at the Centre—bibliography.*

[5] See especially the voluminous works of Swami Sivananda and Vivekananda—*bibliography.*

[6] See my Hindu Scholars, Germany and the Third Reich—see *bibliography.*

CHAPTER 2

Mokṣa and Devībhakti :
the (seeming) Śaṃkara Paradox

GRATEFULLY, we have here a challenge for both anthropologists and indologists. As a spinoff of this effort, I hope I will have shown that no indologist who is not also an anthropologist, and no anthropologist who is not also an indologist can tackle this topic. When it comes to analyze kinship behavior, ritual behavior, political and economic structure of Indian society, the anthropologist doesn't need the indologist, even if the sub-society studied is highly literate in Sanskrit or its vernacular. When an indologist studies the wider ideological implications, say, of a system of Indian logic, not only does he not need an anthropologist, but he can ignore his existence. This effort, however, can simply not be handled by either of the two alone. Enlightened indologists like Ingalls and van Buitenen have long been emphasizing the need for a thorough-going rapproachement between the textual and the contextual, between the indologist and the anthropologist; and enlightened anthropologists like Dumont, Singer, and Kim Marriott have stressed the need to study the texts. A third discipline, the history of ideas, would be a welcome moderator here, and a psychologist might add further excitement. I am writing this section as an indologist turned anthropologist in mid-career, as it were, and also as a monk in the order created by the man on whom this essay reflects.

Śaṃkarācārya lived twelve centuries ago (788-850 AD is the critically accepted range for his life). It appears that a considerable amount of mythical lore had built up around him even during his lifetime. As the founder of the most highly prestigious Hindu monastic Order, the Daśanāmi Saṃpradāya, as the alleged vanquisher of the remnant of Buddhism on the subcontinent, as a powerful sage and saint, sometimes seen as a manifestation of Śiva, and—this is of central concern here—as a teacher of esoteric things which were and are thought to be both arcane and clandestine—a pan-Hindu tradition has been speculating about his involvement with cults of the Goddess, with Śākta tantrism and therefore, by implication, with the systemic arch-foe of the ascetic orders—woman. In this tradition, we find a continuum from total acceptance to total rejection of these events. The more highly ascetic, puritanical pandits deny that he had anything at all to do with the mundane aspect of the Goddess, woman, and they reject the entire episode about which I will have to say quite a bit, according to which he *had* to learn the *ars amatoria* by divine command; the most highly left-handed, the radical tantrics or *vamāpanthis* regard him as the inaugurator of the eroticized form of monistic contemplation, as the founder of full-blown tantric exercise. In between these two extremes, there is a wide gamut of modified acceptance of the claim of his involvement with esoterica around the mother-goddess. To my knowledge, there are no indigenous scholars in the non-critical tradition who deny or even doubt his authorship of the *Saundaryalaharī*, which is regarded as a key-clue to our topic.

Critical scholarship is much less sanguine about all of this, and, indologists, by and large, limit Śaṃkarācārya's traditional polypotestas rather drastically. Since I regard Brown's suggestions as the most level-headed and best documented, I accept and recommend his statements about Śaṃkarācārya's authorship of the *Saundaryalaharī*.[1] His translation of the poem is a fine piece of craftsmanship, and his introduction holds a key for my approach to the question here posed. I am using some five works by Indian authors, dealing with the traditional reports on Śaṃkara's life in the *vijayā* (victory) or *digvijaya* (universal victory' genre. Also, I have assembled material from a type of invocation literature called *sahasranāma* 'the thousand names'; of which there are literally hundreds, for all gods and teachers, even for politicians and movie-actresses; these *sahasranāmas*, usually collections of 108 names, this being a focal number in Indian religious taxonomies, are still being composed on this day. Some of them are contained in the *Purāṇas*, others have signed authors. These *sahasranāmas* are used quite frequently and regularly in the South, in temples and homes, but very rarely in the North. The most important one for us here, of course, is the *Śaṃkaracāryasahasranāma*, which is chanted by the sannyasins in every Maṭha claiming allegiance to the Daśanāmi tradition, every evening. Its authorship is not known. We have *sahasranāmas* for contemporary holy men and for virtually each of the current and recent teachers occupying the seats in the lineage of Śaṃkarācārya.

Let me first present my anthropological assessment of the situation. This, of course, is purely speculative, and the only assurance I can give about its plausibility is that I base it on well-known anthropological and sociological research in India's extreme Southwest where Śaṃkarācārya came from.

I must assume that the social structure in Kerala prevalent into our own day, was not substantially different twelve centuries ago, at least not in regard to the interactional patterns between the Nambuthiri brahmins and the Nayars, the dominant caste of Kerala through most of the intervening centuries, a high, "royal" *śūdra* caste. That is to say, that among the patrilineal patrilocal Nambuthiris, only the oldest son married, i.e., married a Nambuthiri woman; the other sons did not 'marry' at all in the emically optimal sense of the term, but lived in alliances with Nayar and sometimes other non-brahmin women. The Nayars, matrilineal and matrilocal,[2] accepted males of their choice, of Nayar or brahmin caste, as temporary, functional spouses for their women, with a slight preference for Brahmin contractees as progenitors for their children. The children, of course, belonged to the Nayar caste, and lived in the *tārwād*, the house of their mother and maternal uncle, who was the most important figure in the Nayar household. The most highly traditional, and no doubt the most sought-after liaison was between Nayars and Nambuthiris. The latter visited his Nayar spouse, brought his own food and water along, since he could not partake of non-brahmin food; he spent a night or nights, in the Nayar house, and withdrew to his own patrilocal abode (*illom*) in the morning. All this worked well enough, I would assume, for a thousand years—except for the Nambuthiri women—most of them could not get married at all, since only the oldest Nambuthiri brother married. Whether by infanticide, or by diversion of Nambuthiri women into religious pursuits, the literature, both indigenous and foreign was vague about the lot of Nambuthiri women. The fact remains, however, and this is extremely important for my argument–that the Nambuthiri women were the only women in the entire subcontinent who could not reckon with marriage and who must have posed severe problems to the Nambuthiri men. Śaṃkarācārya was a Nambuthiri, but one who, unlike all other Nambuthiris in his day, travelled a lot, saw–according to the tradition–all parts of India right up to Kashmere, and must have compared the status of all other women, brahmin and non-brahmin, to that of his own caste-mates back home in Kerala.

Next, I assume that he was either the oldest or the only son of his father. The only women in his life, in the Vijaya literature, were his mother and the wife of Maṇḍana Miśra, his nemesis–who turned out to be none but the Goddess herself. We shall have to evaluate this story and milk it for all its worth, when it comes up again a bit later. He left his mother when he was eight, to become a sannyasi. Between that event and his encounter with Maṇḍana's wife, the *vijaya* literature does not mention a single encounter with another woman, and this exclusion is so thorough that comparative hagiologists might become alert–for even the Buddha had his encounters; there were temptresses, noble ladies, ordinary women. All other brahmin saint-scholars react to women, and women to them; the biographies–however legendary —of the sixty-four Tamil Śivite saints, the Tamil Vaiṣṇavas, and all other groups are replete with monk-woman encounters, virtually always to establish the integrity, the renunciation, the imperviousness of the holy men against female blandishment. Such episodes are starkly absent in the *vijaya*-literature on Śaṃkarācārya.

It must be clear by now that when I speak of Śaṃkarācārya, I speak about the *image* of Śaṃkarācārya with his contemporaries and his latter day followers and detractors. It is futile to try and single out fact from legend with Indian holy men; even if we write off their miracles, their travels across enormous distances in short periods, and their total victories over all disputants at all times, there still remains the core of interpersonal relations hinted at, or implied by the literature—the life stories of these men were never written by themselves—there are no such autobiographies. We must be content with the image, and that's all we can analyze and evaluate.

We do know sociological facts—that Śaṃkara was a Nambuthiri brahmin, that he left home and took monastic vows at an early age, following the routine of many of his predecessors. But at this point, I suggest that a Nambuthiri in the ninth century, motivated to be a sannyasi, and one who would see the elimination of opponents as his ideological aim (the opponents of course being the remaining Buddhist monks of his day), has lots to compensate for as he sets out to do these things; the women his caste-mates live with are lowcaste women, and they are 'known' for their beauty and sensuality; his sisters, and other adolescent Nambuthiri women will remain unmarried—i.e., the majority will, and they will move around either as distant, religious models of renunciation and near-divinity, as they should, or else they will be perceived as potentially or actually unchaste—potentially by the Nambuthiri males, and actually by the Nayars, among whom it has been the rule to regard Nambuthiri women as targets of lewd thoughts, because they were not 'protected', i.e., married—except for the lucky one among many who was. The young Śaṃkara, during his distant peregrinations, witnessed socio-cultural situations in all other regions of India, which were radically different from what he remembered from his native land, and whenever he did visit Kerala as an established *ācārya*, he must have felt this difference rather poignantly: everywhere except at home (of course, as a sannyasi he wasn't supposed to think in 'at home' terms, but norms for thoughts and actual thoughts differ about as much as norms for action differ from actions)—all adult women are married or widows: everywhere else there was, if not isogamy, at least a close status similarity between husbands and wives; and lowcaste men couldn't view brahmin women as easy prey for their sexual appetites.

Now had he seen an India homogenous in social structure and in marriage systems, he would probably have blamed the women for their alleged laxity—as did and do men in all other parts of India. But being a brilliant mind, he must have realized that the difference in the style of living, of marital and sexual transactions, between his native Kerala and all other regions accounted for the difference in women's styles of living or—what amounts to the same in anthropological wisdom—for the difference in the perception of women's living styles. In other words, he could not possibly blame the women—he had to blame the local law-makers, the regional traditions, the wickedness of the Nayar men's minds, etc.

In southern Italy, as Anne Parsons has shown,[3] men regard women as of two, and of only two, kinds—as *madonnas* or *putanas*. Your mother, your wife, your sister—these are the madonnas. They tend to get fat, they are not desirable. All the slim, desirable women, who are not married or whose husbands cannot prevent them from being looked at, are *putanas*, whores. The *madonna* here is not sexually attractive —unlike in Spain not too far away, where the male crowd does pay partly sexual homage to the image of a beautiful Virgin in procession—they exclaim 'guappa' (lovely woman), and travellers report having seen some men in the crowd touching themselves. But, by and large, there is this clear division between the two models, and this of course, has to do with the entire history of Maryolatry in southern Europe and Latin America.

In Hindu India, the situation is much more complex, although there are striking resemblances. The Hindu mother-goddess, wild or benign, modest or exuberantly aggressive, is always beautiful, and the invocations of the goddess in all the traditions contain quite unabashed sensuous language; Pārvatī is, among other things, *nitaṃbinī* "having (beautiful) buttocks," and sculpture bears this out; Lakṣmī is *pīnapayodhārā* "having big (literally fat) breasts," etc. Yet, of course, she is the mother, hence she cannot be overtly desired by her devotee. But there are fully accepted, sophisticated ways to channel aesthetical and sexual concupiscence into a religious frame, and unlike in Catholicism, the erotic imagery is wide open, and welcome to poets and saints. There is no parallel to this in the litanies to the Virgin.

I have now reached the apex of my theory: Śaṃkarācārya, the Nambuthiri sage scholar, who travelled in India and witnessed mutually incompatible social systems, was capable of doing what few others could: he could exonerate women from being temptresses, a thing no other ascetic of the elitist type dared do. True, later Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints accorded women high status—either as reflections of Rādhā, the divine lover, or as modifications of the divine mother principle. But there was no precedent at Śaṃkara's time. To Śaṃkara, then, the totally exonerated woman was the Goddess.

There remains that insoluble dilemma though: either we accept all the writings ascribed to Śaṃkarācārya by tradition as genuinely his work—in which case we have an arsenal strong enough to account for his Śākta-connections, and if we so wish, for alleged tantric sympathies. But scholars don't accept a very large portion of the productions ascribed to Śaṃkarācārya as actually his own. Ingalls is the most austere among them, granting him only the commentaries on the *Bṛahmasūtra*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Taittirīya* Upanishads, and the *Upadeśāsahasrāri*[4]. If this is a fact, then there is no place for any of the Śākta and Devībhakti episodes and sentiments ascribed to him by the more enthusiastic and less analytical majority. A well known Indian scholar wrote "it seems rather doubtful that the Vedantic teacher Śaṃkara, an ardent advocate of Absolute Idealism, should have written this Tantra work" (referring to the *Saundaryalaharī*.[5] But among Indian scholars, this view is rather rare—most pandits view Śaṃkara as highly incorporative. On a superficial count, some hundred works ranging in size from short 'eightliners' (*aṣṭaka*) to the commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* are ascribed to him in the monastic tradition of the Daśanāmi Order, which *is* his order just as much as the Franciscans are *the* order of St. Francis. But even within this Order, there is a wide divergence, among individual monks, with regard to the assessment of his involvement with Devī worship and tantrism of any form. Some ranking ecclesiastics in the Daśanāmi Order insist that all the traditions about Śaṃkarācārya be accepted for truth, including the crucial episode with Maṇḍana Miśra's spouse. Others reject this event as fiction; and a few say that though it is a true event, it should not be indiscriminately divulged or made part of the more general homiletic. All Daśanāmi monks seem to take it for granted that all the tracts ascribed to Śaṃkarācārya were indeed his own writings, and they frown at scholarship, both Indian and Western, which would abridge the total claim. Incidentally, all monastics, including those belonging to orders strongly antagonistic to Advaita and to Śaṃkarācārya, share the axiom of Śaṃkara's authorship of all the tracts traditionally ascribed to him.

All non-Daśanāmi monastics I have talked to, regardless of their affiliation with orders representing mutually exclusive views, believe that the Śaṃkara-Maṇḍana Miśra's spouse episode is true, but the more antagonistic point this out as a weakness in Śaṃkarācārya's character. "A Vaiṣṇava *vairāgī* (renunciate) wouldn't let himself be trapped into a situation like that," a *mahant* (abbot) of a Vaiṣṇava monastery mused.

Briefly, this is the story which I regard as focal to the Śaṃkarācārya-Devī tradition: as Śaṃkarācārya was about to defeat Maṇḍana Miśra, who claimed superiority for the non-monastic, ritual-centered view of the scripture, Maṇḍana's spouse, who being highly learned had been asked by her husband and Śaṃkarācārya to moderate the discussion, insisted that she would ask him a question on the *kāmaśāstrā* (ars amatoria). If he could answer it, she would cede victory to him, and declare her husband's defeat. Having been chaste all his life–he took *sannyāsa* when he was less than ten years old–he could not possibly answer such a question satisfactorily. He therefore entered to body of a king through the power of *kāyapraveśa* "entering another body," which is one of the many *siddhis* a great yogi controls. For a while then, he lived a king's life, learning all there was to be learned about the art of love, among the king's wives and concubines. His real body was kept and protected by his disciples for the duration of his 'absence' in a royal body. As he returned and resumed his own body, he answered all the questions Ubhayabhāratī's (this was Mrs. Maṇḍana's name according to some traditions) asked to her satisfaction. She declared him victor in the dispute, Maṇḍana kept his promise and followed Śaṃkara as a monastic disciple, and the lady took on her real form–she proved to be noone less than the goddess of learning herself. Her name, Ubhayabhāratī "Both Bhāratīs" might have given people an idea even before this cataclysmic event, since "both" (*ubhaya*) Bhāratīs couldn't mean much else than a worldly Bhāratī, i.e., Maṇḍana's spouse, and the divine Bhāratī, i.e., the goddess of learning.

It is from the reaction of later days and later scholars to this story that we get our main lead, For as I said, we don't know what the actual Śaṃkarācārya had done or not done – the Śaṃkarācārya *as perceived* is what we are concerned with as anthropologists. Some twenty-three accounts of Śaṃkara's life are extant and easily available.[6]

There is, however, a very much larger number of apocrypha, composed in Sanskrit and modern Indian languages. Less than one fourth of the texts I have seen—which was a total of fifteen including the standard *Śaṃkaravijayas* – mention this episode. But in popular discourse, it is always told when anyone, monastic or lay, recounts the master's deeds.

Modern Hindu scholars are, by and large, quite uncomfortable about it. Thus, T.M.P. Mahadevan wrote in a footnote to his own booklet on Saṃkarācārya.[7] "An irrelevant interlude is introduced here by Śamkara's biographers, making Sarasavānī (another name of Maṇḍana's wife) ask for a debate with Saṃkara, which involved his entering into the dead body of a king, Amaruka, in order to learn *Kāmaśāstrā*." Of course, the 'interlude' is all but irrelevant. Mahadevan is a puritanical neo-Hindu, chairman of the Philosophy Department of Madras University for over four decades, and an academician whose main inspiration was Vivekananda in his young days. He could have rejected this whole episode as sheer fiction, but this would have suggested that he also rejects other apocrypha of Śaṃkarācārya, i.e., the large list of works ascribed to him which he never wrote—and as a pious devotee, Mahadevan cannot face such austerity.

The late V. Raghavan, doyen of modern Hindu Sanskrit scholars, told me "all this nonsense about his (Śaṃkara's) involvement with *siddhis* and with taking an exam. in *kāmaśāstra* is the work of his antagonists. No true follower of Śaṃkara believes them."[8] Raghavan was wrong: Bhāratī Krishna Tīrtha, the then Śaṃkarācārya of Govardhana Pīṭha not only believed it, but used the episode quite frequently in his sermons and talks to monks and lay audiences.

Most scholars, including the late Norman Brown, held that at least the first 41 stanzas of the *Saundaryalaharī*, the *Ānandalahari* might have been Śaṃkarācārya's own work. But the rest probably isn't, since there is too much internal, stylistic and substantial conflict militating against it. But to the living tradition of Śaṃkara, both learned and folk, this text is crucial, since it establishes the *Śrīvidyā*, the most important tantric technique originated in orthodox, brahmanical circles. The *Śrīvidyā*, in a way, is the only respectable form of tantrism from the brahmins' point of view, and it is practiced by a very large number of caste Hindus, particularly in the South. It does not involve any sexual practices like left-handed tantrism,[9] and it has the continuous approval of the *gaddis* 'seats' of the Śaṃkarācāryas, the official line of the first Śaṃkara's successors. K.R. Venkataraman, one-time member of the Historical Records Commission, Government of India, and a spokesman for the current Śaṃkarite hierarchy, wrote "Sri Vidyā. . .has two aspects, external and internal. . .The whole concept of the *Vidyā* is represented in diagrams or *yantras*, the most potent of which is the *Śrīyāntrā* which represents all the categories of the universe and of the human body and their final absorption in the centre which is Śiva-Śakti. Śaṃkara installed the Śrīyantra not only in the maṭhs (monasteries) he founded but also in several temples of rather (*sic*) all-India importance."[10]

In the perennial lore of Hindu transactions, once you have a *yantra* (same as *maṇḍala*), you have a concatenation of esoteric forms of worship of a personalistically conceived deity, very frequently female, and of perceived access to *siddhis* or occult powers. Persons identified with the esoteric persuasion and hence with tantrism, are *yantra*-practitioners, who "draw formulaically on the power to manipulate events."[11]

What does this mean for our query ? I think it means that whatever the 'real,' historical Śaṃkarācārya did or did not do, is beside the point, because the historical Śaṃkāracārya is not what Hindu tradition is concerned with. In it, Śaṃkarācārya *certainly* composed the *Śrīvidyā*: he certainly installed the *Śrī-maṇḍalas* at various places, all over the subcontinent. He probably encountered the Goddess Herself, who tested his universal knowledge including his familiarity with the *ars amatoria*: a true *digvijayī* 'world conquering' ascetic must be master of all skills stated in the *śāstras*. Furthermore, the genius of Indian perceptions contains an absence of comparatives and the co-presence of superlatives for each designatum: once a person (or book, or thing, or god) is the most marvelous he, she, or it is also every other superlative that comes to mind. Anyone who writes a tantric poem, is a tantric, a Śākta, regardless of whether he has written anything else in that line or not. And *a fortiori*, the *ācārya* who has composed the *Saundarya-laharī*, must be the greatest tantric.

There is a final prod which confirms the image of Śaṃkarācārya as a *siddha*; a tantric who controls and defeats lesser tantrics. The story is contained in about half of the *digvijayas* I have seen. It is contained in a recent English language *digvijaya* composed in prose, by a pious Andhra government officer.[12] Let me quote the passage, which is also a gem of Indian English: "In those days, there lived in those parts, a sect of religious fanatics called Kapālikas, who believed in Human sacrifice, for propitiating Śiva in the form of Kapāli." He then goes on to say how Śaṃkarācārya was sitting in meditation. "The Kapālika saw him and thought he would make the ācārya a most fitting sacrifice for the god." He then goes on, "at that time, Padmapāda (one of Śaṃkara's four apostles) who was protecting his 'guru' with the powers of his spirit, intuitively felt, that his guru was in danger, and he at once uttered certain sacred 'mantras' and came in haste toward where Śaṃkara was sitting, chanting the Nrisimha mantra. The Kapālika was just lifting the sword to cut off the head of Śaṃkara. Then Lord Nrisimha appeared on the scene in his frightful form of half-lion and half-man, and tore the Kapālika to pieces."

In all *digvijayas*, as well as in the very large number of *stotrams* (hymns of praise) composed in honor of Śaṃkarācārya, we have recurrent emphasis on his establishing shrines for the Devī in various forms. In a synoptic reading of five *digvijayas* and three *stotrams*, there are references to a total of eighteen *pratiṣṭhas* (establishments and consecrations or empowerments of a shrine), of which thirteen are to various Devīs, and only five to male divinities, both Śiva and his derivates, and Viṣṇu.

The poser of this contribution is not, or not primarily one made by western scholars. It presupposes systemic wonderment, as it were, at the combination of abstract, in this case monistic *advaita* doctrine, speculation and contemplative practice, and devotion to a personalistically conceived, anthropomorphic and anthropopsychic divinity. To the brahmin mind, these two seem incompatible–and this incompatibility is constantly pointed out in the learned assemblies of pandits, the *śāstrārtha*. Yet the true genius in the accomplishments of such abstract impersonal meditation can combine it with a seemingly contradictory stance, that of intense *bhakti* to the *iṣṭadevatā*, the chosen deity. Śaṃkarâcārya not only fills this model of religious virtuosity, but he has been quoted as *the* example for such arduous accomplishment, for at least a thousand years. Western readers have to extrapolate here: to, say, the Roman Catholic scholar, the tradition of Thomas Aquinas' Aristotelian thought and writings and his personal devotion to the Virgin does not seem particularly astonishing. But the Hindu situation is quite different, because when the brahmin scholar says 'abstract,' he means it. The Christian God, the one of the Aquinate, however Aristotelian in his treatment, remains a personal god, his abstractness is not stated anywhere nearly as strongly as that of the brahman in the *advaita* system in India. I recall the day of my own monastic initiation (*dīkṣā*) in Shyamlatal, Himalayan Region, U.P., India, back in 1949: my guru asked me "is the God X (I had suggested that this was my chosen deity) to be the be-all and end-all of your life, or are you more attracted to the totally impersonal, the one without a second, the brahman?" I tried to hedge, and asked if there wasn't a mixed mantra, a way to do both at the same time. "No,", said the guru, "you have to make a choice." I chose the advaitic initiation, but got involved, and still am, in rituals and techniques directed toward the personalistically conceived deity. This has been pointed out by my fellow monastics, as well as by lay people in India, friends and foes—here is a man who like his order's preceptor, is both an advaitin and a *bhakta* of a personal *iṣṭadevatā*. It follows a very well established pattern. It is not only pervasive in the Hindu ambiance, but it spreads equally to Buddhist neighbors. One of Sri Lanka's most outstanding monk-teachers is Ven. Belangoda Ananda Maitreya, a scholar's scholar in Theravāda Buddhism and Pali, with a fine knowledge of Sanskrit, quite infrequent and not really expected from Theravāda monks in Sri Lanka. The venerable *bhikkhu* also is "a great admirer of Kataragama." He has, so I understand, meditated on the Kataragama mantra and though he wouldn't visit the shrine (Buddhist monks are not expected to), he recommends this pilgrimage highly to lay Buddhists in the land. Kataramaga (Subbramania, Murukan), is a tantric god par excellence, son of Śiva and Śakti, and well researched today especially by anthropologists.[14]

A metonymical process is at work here. Śaṃkarācārya was the founder-teacher of *advaita* philosophy and meditation, to the Indian mind a highly abstract mode of thinking and contemplation; but he now epitomizes an all-Hindu possibility of combining the most abstract with the most concrete, the worship of Devī. There is no more of a paradox here then there is to Albert Einstein also being a virtuoso on the violin. Somehow, one expects such mutually removed skills to be co-present in a great man; and somehow, romantics and other seekers of ever greater profundity stipulate that there isn't any *real* difference in the end. "For those who *really* know what looks mutually exclusive is one and the same in the final analysis" is a pretty cosmopolitan stance. The Śaṃkara complex is an outstanding Indian instantiation.

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CHAPTER 3

Hindu Ways of Life

OFTENTIMES, when you ask a modern, English-speaking Hindu, what sort of religion Hinduism is, you will get the answer "Hinduism is not a religion. It is a way of life." Buddhists say the same about Buddhism, some Christians say it about Christianity. Every religion is in fact a way of life. Numerous and contrastive in the case of Hinduism, a single way of life does not account for the numerous and contrastive varieties which make up Hindu behavior. It is behavior which we are talking about, actual behavior, not normative behavior. This is a sore point with modern Hindus, unless they are social scientists: the analysis of Hindu behavior as it is, not as it ought to be or, what often amounts to the same, of Hindu behavior as seen by modern Hindus, tends to aggravate modern Hindus, more than, say, the analysis of metropolitan Christian or Jewish behavior irritates the Jew or the Christian. The difference lies in the fact that Hinduism, unlike Christianity, but not quite unlike Judaism, is tied to and permeated by ethnic and cultural identifications, which are counteroperative in the assessment of religious behavior by its own actors. A sophisticated Christian, when told about actual Christian behavior, not about what Christians are supposed to be like, can shrug it off as irrelevant, since he may no longer see himself as a Christian. But

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a Hindu cannot shrug it off, since he remains a Hindu, regardless of whether he accepts any Hindu tenets or none. Anyone of Indian parents who is not a Muslim or a Christian or a Jain or a Parsee or a Sikh is *ipso facto* a Hindu, whether he likes it or not—and this accounts for 75% of the population of India. Trivially, then, the Hindu way of life would be the way of life of the majority of the people in India. Analytically, what we have to establish here is the ways of life of Hindus in regard to their manipulating culturally postulated extrahuman entities.'[1] These entities are the divine being or beings worshipped, thought about, or feared, as also the self as a religious, culturally postulated entity, not as an empirical unit. We shall analyze three types of modal Hindu behavior parallel to Hindu views as stated in the companion chapter in this book. The actions and manipulations of the villagers form the first group; the learned grassroot specialists of the Sanskritic tradition constitute the second category; the much smaller, but standard-setting urban Hindus are the third section whose religious behavior will be set forth. This threefold division is minimal; less charitable anthropologists of Indian religion may see many more. *There is no all-over Hindu way of life*, the apologists' claim notwithstanding.[2]

What is, however, crucially common to all Hindu behavior is that it is tied to the ethos of a very large number of stratified social units, i.e., *jātis* or castes. A caste, in its briefest possible definition, is an endogamous unit; in descending order of definitional importance, it is also a commensal and a trade-exclusive unit in its history. The differential ritualistic and theological expectations were laid down in a very large number of scriptures. Their effect on today's religious behavior is exiguous except perhaps on the second social level, the grassroots learned specialists, brahmins and ritualistic scholars. Yet the mode of expectations remains intact: the higher a person's caste status, the more complex are the ritualistic expectations, the more elitist and exclusive his or her eating and matrimonial rules, the more exclusive and privileged his access to ritualistic sources such as temples, teachers, and texts. On the lowest end of the scale, the very large majority of Hindu people belong to the lowest ritualistic units or castes, their religious involvement is the least elaborate, and the most removed from the Sanskritic sources. In matters of food and matrimony—central criteria of ritualistic status in Hindu India–the majority of low caste people is less exclusive, and generally less constrained than their high caste fellow Hindus. In the West, there is a popular notion that Hindu widows don't remarry; but this is the case only with upper caste and upper class Hindus, accounting for less than fifteen per cent of the total population. All other widows remarry rightaway or very soon after their husbands' demise. Vegetarianism is a much more complicated theme. It is regarded highly by all Hindus, and has been for at least too and one half millennia, though there is evidence that the ancient Aryan Indians ate meat, even beef.[4] In theory, lowcaste Hindus are non-vegetarians and highcaste Hindus are vegetarians. It doesn't work this way: Rajputs or Kshattriyas, high-caste Hindus of royal provenance or claim, eat meat—at least the men do; Bengali brahmins eat fish, sometimes meat; the mercantile *banyas* and *marwaris*, who rank beneath both brahmins and Rajputs in the all

India normative caste scale, are possibly the strictest vegetarians; and the majority of lowcaste people are vegetarians by default, as it were, since meat is expensive. They will however eat it when they can afford it, and it is this that stamps them as non-vegetarian, for vegetarianism in India is like virginity everywhere–you either have it or you don't. There are no degrees—whether you eat meat once a year or every day, by Hindu standards you are a non-vegetarian.

Though alcoholic drinks are in theory forbidden in the Hindu teachings, most men of all castes except some brahmin and some merchant groups drink; very few women of any social group do except urban alienates including the college and *haute culture* population of the large cities. Most men smoke, except the orthodox or individuals in the cities who choose not to. No Hindu women smoke except a tiny fraction of the wealthy, westernized city population. As to the ingestion of mind-affecting drugs, the division between takers of *cannabis sativa* (*gāñja*, *bhāng*), either in the form of a potion mixed with sherbet or milk, or smoked, seems to be regional, with rather heavy use by males in the northern central regions of India, and virtually no users in the South. The Hindu attitude toward these drugs is much more lenient than toward alcohol consumption, and in fact *bhāng* (*cannabis sativa*) is part of certain village and city based calendrical ritual, and is felt to be quite compatible with, and even conducive to religious states of mind. This, however, is definitely not the case with the urban alienate Hindus, who regard any use of drugs with the same horror as did district attorneys in American cities in the sixties. This is partly due to the pizza effect,[5] partly to the general puritanism of urban Hindus, whose teachers were brought up in the squeamish, anti-ecstatic ways of their missionary tutors, who created much of the educational ideology which remains, substantially unchanged. In almost all parts of Hindu society, women are more conservative in matters of religiously enjoined abstention. For every twenty or thirty men who drink, there will be perhaps one woman who does; for every ten or so meat eating men, there will be at the most one woman who does. The observance of a rather large number of *vrats* (vows) as part of the calendrical ritual is almost entirely the domain of women, and since a very large proportion of Hindu women of all strata observe such vows as *ekadaśi*,[6] little is made of it. Certain brahmin groups, especially in the Dravidian South, observe a far more elaborate set of rituals and of culinary abstentions.

When modern urban Hindus talk about Hinduism being a 'way of life' rather than a religion, their reference is purely normative, if the total Hindu population is the referend. There is no doubt that Hindus concerned with a Hindu way of life, whatever that may mean to different people, do *not* do what they think they are doing. In increasing numbers, modern Hindus *talk* about yoga, about spiritual power, meditation, etc. In the case of urban Hindus, this is again partly due to the pizza-effect. Hindus know that the West is now emulating Hindu codes and techniques of meditation, and has done well with it. Around the turn of the century, modern urban Hindu were embarrassed to talk about religious matters. This has changed radically during the past three decades. The western espousal of yoga etc., has been grist to the Hindu mills of the primacy of inventions and discoveries in ancient India.

It was quite difficult, as readers will remember, to establish a common denominator for Hindu views of life. To find such a denominator for Hindus ways of life is virtually impossible. The fuzzy, somewhat sanctimonious, somewhat pompous assertion of modern Hindus, that the Hindu ways of life is morally, spiritually etc., unique, is of anthropo-sociological interest as part of the self-representation of Hindus today, but it does not add any information about Hindu behavior. Listening to a modern, urban Hindu talk about Hindu behavior is very much like listening to a midwestern person talking about Christian behavior, only the mythological terms differ. Such sermon, however, does not help us a bit. The fact is that Hindu ways of life are intensely tied to the territorial culture. This is also the case with the world religions; Muslims outside the Arab world have no more relationship to Arab culture than, say, New York Jews to the Mid-eastern social settings of early Judaism. For the Hindu, whether he knows it or not, the religious scene is the Indian cultural scene. Hindu spirituality, and Hindu religious behavior is Indian religious behavior. When transposed outside India into non-Indian environments, we obtain such spectacles as the Guru Maharaj or Hare Krishna movement, and the swelling number of adulterated cults with a truncated Indian background. Hindus in the diaspora, however, remain Indians in their ways, whether they are expatriates in Kenya, Natal, Fiji, or Trinidad.

Thus, the term 'a good Hindu' makes sense only in an elliptical fashion. Quite unlike a good Muslim, or a good Christian, or even a good Buddhist, which implies a territorially neutral type of comportment, "a good Hindu" makes sense only in the fact of the territorial and culture-specific context. A Hindu woman doctor's statement[7] 'any good man is a Hindu,' is either a silly dialect or else the language of modern India prone to ignore culture-specificity, since it seems to impede pan-human relevance. A Christian can cease to be a Christian by some such formal step as leaving his church and not joining another one, or by rejecting the tenets of Christianity consciously, or by articulating anti-Christian value orientations. A Hindu does not cease to be a Hindu if he does nothing which Hindu codes enjoin. In fact, the vast majority of Hindus do nothing that these codes enjoin; such pervasive omission, however, does not disqualify them from being Hindus. A person is a Hindu because he is born into a Hindu *jāti* (caste). He can cease to be a Hindu by converting to another faith – he can become Muslim or Christian. Other than that he or she remains a Hindu with no one ever doubting it. You can ask 'is X a Christian' ? and ask this as an ideological question. You cannot ask is 'is Y a Hindu ?' unless he has made a conscious effort not to be one (as by conversion)—for the counter-question would be 'what else is he' ?—if the person referred to belongs to a Hindu family, regardless of what he does or does not do, of what he believes or does not believe. The closest crosscultural resemblance is that of a Jew: a Jew is a Jew if he is born a Jew and if he does not take any formal step to become something else. He does not have to believe in anything, he can eat what he wishes—he remains a Jew. This went so far in pre-World War II Europe that converts were referred to as 'baptized Jews.'

Let me now start with typical Hindu village behavior which, after all, accounts for over 80% of actual Hindu behavior. The main concern of the Hindu villager is survival, as an individual and as a group (caste, village, extended family). To him or her, life is beset with an overwhelming number of spiritual dangers, which lurk in every niche and corner. His religious engagement is therefore predominantly palliative and prophylactic. He is not concerned with spiritual truth, with any of the complex metaphysical theories of the Hindu teachings, even though he gleans more of them through various agents of Hinduism, local priests, itinerant holy men, mythological movies etc., than does the Kansas rancher with regard to Christian doctrine. He is concerned with survival, and the instruments of survival—crops, the weather, health, the tax collector, hostile factions, other castes, inter and intra-village strife, litigation. Village Hinduism is pantheistic and pandemonistic. The forces in and around the house and the village are seldom benevolent. They must be appeased, controlled, cajoled. To this end, the Hindu villages have a number of part-time or full-time religious practitioners. Some of them are hereditary, especially the brahmin priest who takes care of the general calendrical ritual and the rites of passage, as well as of the proper worship of the all-India deities represented in the village. Since most diseases are thought to be caused by spiritual agents, the personnel dealing with them encompasses diagnosticians, curers, exorcists, herbalists, and a large number of regionally different, but fairly typical shamanistic types. They manipulate these culturally postulated entities. Putting this most succinctly, one might say that the concern of the villager is avoidance of ritualistic danger, the job of their specialists being to correct situations where avoidance has been unsuccessful. The 'good life' is of no concern to the specialist, except when it is a translation of the sum total of ritualistic avoidances. The good life in the Judaeo-Christian or Muslim sense is controlled by the village society and by gossip lines. Deviants are kept in line by these, and sanctions are imposed by consensual gossip. If a man sleeps with his neighbor's wife, or increases the size of his field by surreptitiously moving the stone boundary half a yard into his neighbors field, he does not incur any religious danger; but if he should step across the territory sacred to some village spirit, if he eats forbidden food, or if a women neglects menstrual taboos, or if a man neglects to make the necessary oblations to divinities, he is in trouble and the religious specialist must step in with his skills. The avoidance of dangers occurring through the omission of minimal observances is paired with the avoidance of the commission of polluting and magically dangerous acts. These commissions and omissions are numerous and the repertoire of dangers differs from place to place. The patterns, however, are similar all over the subcontinent. Some people are more prone to ritualistic pollution and hence more susceptible to spiritual danger than others. Women in their menses, women in childbirth, men and women afflicted by pollution due to the death of a relative, contact with forbidden food, the careless accepting of cooked food from people of much lower ritualistic status, are some of the typical categories of spiritual danger experienced and dealt with by villagers.

The methods used by the various practitioners follow pretty well established all-Indian patterns, shared incidentally by Muslims and other non-Hindu practitioners on the subcontinent. The brahmins' minimal skill consists of rote chanting of Sanskrit formula, the correct execution of rituals belonging to the "great tradition" the non-brahmin curers, diagnosticians, exorcists, etc., achieve their skills by some sort of training, or by natural propensity, sometimes by inheritance. Many methods are trance-related. Like cause and like effect, by and large, seems to be the rule: persons possessed by some spirit are treated by practitioners who in turn communicate with the molesting spirit by possession.

The borderline between learning by knowledge and learning by intuition is hard to draw. The local *vaids*, *ojhās*, and other curers share a considerable degree of familiarity with the Indian *materia medica*, which is always tied in with ritualistic procedure. F.e. symptom X has to be treated by a decoction of herbs a.b.c., prepared during a certain phase of the moon and with proper incantations.

Increasingly, village traditions are modified by the ingression of formal education. Modes of treatment are eclectic, and seemingly contradictory therapies are not seen as such. If a person gets sick, the help of the shaman, the local *vaid* or traditional herbalist, and of the government dispensary are sought. Yet even doctors trained in modern 'allopathic' medicine often retain a core of mythological diagnosis, suffused by Hindu notions totally foreign to secular medical science. Thus, the division of foods, medicines, and of diseased into 'hot' and 'cold,' is part of the traditional corpus—yet many doctors of modern medicine believe in it at least in part and, presumably, include such considerations in their diagnostic and therapeutic work.

We now proceed to the 'great tradition,' Hinduism practised by the brahmin and other high caste groups in rural as well as in urban areas. I am talking about people who have not been alienated by the bowdlerized version of modern, urban, Renaissance Hinduism—this type will be the object of the third and concluding section. 'Great tradition' Hinduism rests squarely on the enormous, complex, highly sophisticated tradition of Sanskrit learning, even when its practitioners do not know Sanskrit, or very little of it. The history of this impressive tradition of orthopraxis goes back to the Vedic age, about 2000 BC. The main rituals practised today have remained largely unchanged over the centuries; the need of rote learning, and the reluctance to commit ritualistic texts, especially the Veda, to writing for fear of polluting it, made it necessary for the high caste practitioners to commit very large tracts of texts to memory. In this very day and age, there are thousands of brahmins, in villages and towns, who know substantial portions of the Veda and other religious texts by heart. The main application of this traditional knowledge is the perennial performance of the rites of passage: birth, male initiation, certain calendrical and occasional rites, and death. The central theme is *pūjā* (formal worship), *yajña* (sacrificial ceremony), and *upadeśa* (religious instruction) on the side of the brahmin practitioners, and the passive acceptance of *saṃskāras* (ritualistic entitlement) on the side of the audience. Ideally, only people belonging to the 'twice-born' castes, i.e., to those social groups where the Vedic ceremony of *upanayana* (the investiture with the holy thread accompanying instruction into the basic wisdom of the Veda) is conducted for boys who become full-fledged members of their adult society by this ceremony. Without it, men cannot be married: in order to save money, it frequently happens that the *upanayana* ceremony is postponed until a day or so before the young man's wedding, so that guests, food, and gifts to the brahmins do not have to be duplicated. Weddings in particular are extremely costly, and often run a father into debt for a long time, particularly the bride's father; for although dowry giving has been outlawed in independent India, the law is hardly implemented, since the giving of dowry and matrimonial hospitality are central means to obtain and perpetuate social status and respect, and a bargaining position for the marriage of one's other children.

On the level of the most highly involved, the demarcation between lay and monastic is quite fuzzy, and can probably not be made on such formal grounds as affiliation with a monastic order. There is a large number of older and not so old men among brahmins and other caste hindus, who dedicate most of their waking hours to the pursuit of religion. It is not uncommon for a South Indian brahmin, for instance, to rise at 4 a.m., take his bath, prepare for *pūjā*, adorn his forehead with prescribed color designs, and sit in meditation and worship following a strictly prescribed set of incantations, contemplations, and other ritualistic observances in front of the house deity, for three to five hours, if not longer. This involves the chanting of long passages from the canonical texts, complex gestures of the hands and fingers (*mudrā*), the offering of flowers, *ghee* (clarified butter) milk, sugar, and a number of prescribed ingredients to the deity. Most brahmin houses contain their private shrine, which differs in size from a small niche in the kitchen (the kitchen itself being a ritualistically focal area in the Hindu household, cooking and the consumption of food being regarded as ritualistic acts in themselves), adorned with stone or bronze icons, calendar art paintings and polychrome representations of various deities and an array of sacrificial tools placed on an elevated section in the area, in front of which the worshipper sits cross-legged performing the *pūjā*, to a separate room in the house, depending on the wealth and the religious motivation of the householder. When all this is done, the man would have his breakfast and proceed to his daily work, to a bank, an office, a machine shop, or to any other occupation. When he returns in the evening, a shorter version of similar procedure may conclude the day. No movies, no entertainment, no restaurants, no visiting except perhaps for weddings and religious assemblies (*satsaṅg*) would interrupt the succession of religious acts for this segment of the Hindu population.

Monks of close to a hundred monastic organizations tend to spend rather less time in religious pursuits than *engagé* laymen of the kind just described. In theory, they meditate without the aid of ritualistic objects for long hours of the day and the night, but in actual practice most monks spend a life of relative idleness; their established charisma permits them to continue this somewhat unproductive lifestyle in the face of social and cultural change and modernization. A cautious estimate would number monastic personnel in Hīndu India at about one million, which means that roughly one out of every two hundred Hindu males has some sort of monastic affiliation or status. The relation between the monastic and the lay segments of the population accounts for the totally unique strength of religious concern among the various audiences of Hindu India. The West has become familiar with the term '*guru*' only recently. In Hindu India, the relation between guru and disciple is ancient and well established, and has not been weakened substantially over the past centuries. Any person who seeks to implement more intensive religious aspirations would try to find a guru, i.e., a teacher who would initiate him or her into meditational or ritualistic techniques that would eventually lead to emancipation from pain, ignorance, and rebirth. Though the guru is not necessarily a monk, and certainly not by scriptural injunction, most gurus who do so initiate people are in fact monastics. The degree and range of influence of a guru, monastic or lay, varies from the initiation of a handful of disciples in a lifetime to the complete spiritual control of millions of people in India, and in recent decades in other countries as well. Take a saint-teacher like Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi in the southern state of Mysore: a brahmin of low literacy, his alleged mesmeric and mystical powers have made him the most sought out, worshipped, and famous yogi in modern times. Estimates about the number of his followers vary from two to twenty-five million. Among them, there are poor, illiterate peasants and Ph.D.s from Harvard and the London School of Economics. Sai Baba distributes holy ashes (*bhasma*) from his palms to thousands of assembled faithful, without replenishing the substance from an outside source. He reportedly materializes watches from the air; he cures terminal cancer from a distance of many thousand miles. His own sermon is simple, simplistic, theologically unsophisticated, and self-centered—he is God incarnate for the benefit of this age, in line with the statement of the Bhagavadgītā, which says that God incarnates himself in every age, for the protection of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked. Some of the most learned Hindu scholars do not object to these claims, since the established notion is that the perfect saint *is* the supreme source of the Veda and of religious information. It is not that the saint corroborates the scriptures; rather, the scriptures corroborate the actions of the saint—his word, if he be a true rishi (seer, saint), *are* Veda. This is why even the most learned Hindus will accept the words of an illiterate charismatic if there is consensus that he is indeed a holy man, a seer. There is an oft-quoted Sanskrit saying which states that the guru is identical with Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, the three most powerful divinities of the Hindu pantheon, and by extension, with the divine spirit. Complete surrender to the guru is the highest religious act. The guru, in his turn, has achieved, or is thought to have achieved consummate contemplational success and spiritual power through penance, study, and life long meditation. Although, the guru is regarded as a divine incarnation, as divinity personified, by *his* followers, he may be quite obnoxious to the followers of other teachers with contrastive teachings. Inter-guru competition is strong.

The life of an initiate who takes his commitment to the guru seriously, approximates scriptural recommendations. He becomes extremely abstemious in matters of food, sex, and general creature comforts. Society regards such a person with respect, even with awe, regardless of the degree of modernization in the social segment surrounding such a person.

As for the rest of the caste-Hindu population, their ways of life are but formally subject to the prescriptions, recommendations and to the involvements described in the preceding paragraphs. There is no doubt, however, that the average Hindu is more interested in theology than the average Christian of comparable social status in the western world. Unlike China and Japan, India and her culture incline toward a non-secular value orientation. Though most non-alienated Hindus perform or attend a very small number of religious functions, hardly ever visit a temple, and restrict their religious activities to the basic life-cycle rituals such as marriage and death observances, and though most people hardly ever meditate or offer formal worship, there is a latent undercurrent of religious concern unparalleled in other parts of the world. Somehow, the general feeling is one of putting off the religious life. The affairs of daily life absorb all the energy of the Hindu, but he feels that a time will come when religious interest will awaken, when he will be eager to pursue emancipation, and when he will search for a guru. All Hindus of this large segment share the feeling that they ought to do more than they are doing, yet the duties of the householder being part of the religiously prescribed commitments, this procrastinative feeling never causes any anxiety or guilt.

Many Hindus of the traditional segment do, however, perform occasional supererogatory observances. India is a land of persistent pilgrimage, and even the most nonchalant Hindu might proceed on a religious trip when he feels the need.[8] A pilgrimage is undertaken with a specific purpose, after making a specific vow to a specific deity. People do not usually go on a pilgrimage out of a sheer pious urge. Typically, a Hindu would vow and undertake a pilgrimage either to repair some damage (disease of a child, barrenness of the wife, loss of wealth, loss of health, etc.), or to fulfill a vow of the form "if I am cured from x (or if my wife gets pregnant, etc.), I will undertake a pilgrimage to . . .". Pilgrimages are not usually made to the presiding deity of the family or his or her shrine, but to a deity that specializes in correcting the particular malaise in point. Regardless of whether the shrine of the divinity is located in the vicinity of the vow-taker or whether it is many hundred of miles away, the procedure is virtually identical once the person gets there. The feeling is that there is higher merit, when a far away, famous shrine is visited. The wealth of the vow-taker is of course important—a very poor man in South India can hardly afford to travel 1500 miles North to Varanasi, the most important pilgrimage site of Hinduism; yet one sees very poor, even indigent pilgrims at shrines which are very distant from their native village or town: if the damage to be repaired, or the desire to achieve some change in crucial matters is very strong, no effort is spared, and the burden of an arduous, costly pilgrimage is assumed.

Such all-India shrines as Varanasi, Allahabad, Hardvar, Kedarnath, or Rameshvaram in the extreme South, are visited by pilgrims from all parts of the subcontinent. The worship prescribed at these places is conducted by brahmin specialists who guide the pilgrims on their religious circuit. It is those specialists (*pāṇḍā*), who are also the genealogists of the Hindus : the name and the descent group of each pilgrim has been entered into the ledgers kept by the families for centuries, and it is perhaps only through this institution that Hindus can learn about their forebears. There are no birth-certificates or wedding papers in the villages, and few in the cities which have not yet been bureaucratized. The Hindu learns that men are born unequal, until he becomes subject to modern, formal education. Even then he finds it hard to conceive of all people as being equal by birth. Even a highly sophisticated, modern Hindu lady said to her little son rebukingly "don't act like this; a *śūdra* boy acts like this," or words to that effect. Differential evaluation of actions done by people of different caste status is very strong indeed: only a brahmin can conduct a wedding or initiate the son of a caste Hindu. When the same brahmin acts immorally, or when he otherwise invokes the censure of his village community, people will reprimand him severely "you Sir, being a brahmin, act like this ?" When a sweeper or a tailor or a potter acts in an identical manner people tend to shrug their shoulders "what can you expect from a (sweeper, potter, tailor) ?"

Services rendered by members of one caste for members of another caste are not seen primarily as economic transactions. Rather, they are viewed ritualistically: the term for this pervasive system of ritualistically controlled services transferred between patron and client caste groups, is *jajmāni*, which means, literally, the act of generating a ceremony, or of supporting it. The anthropological literature about the *jajmāni* system is very large indeed,[9] and when we talk about Hindu ways of life, this complex pattern must be kept in mind at all times. There is no intrinsic difference between actions which would be called 'religious' as opposed to 'secular' in a Judaeo-Christian setting. The imposition of this conceptual dualism is of recent date in India—and it has been interiorized only by the third and last group to be discussed, the urban modern alienated Hindus.

I will use the terms 'modern', 'urban', 'alienated' as synonyms, for brevity's sake. 'Alienated', because this small, but extremely important element of Hindu society has gone through a long process of disaffection with religion, effecting increasing rejection of ritual and observance during the British rule, when it was felt to be counteroperative for modern people to perpetuate the intensive involvement with ritual and with metaphysical and mythological thought in the way of the past generations. It was felt (and many Hindus feel this way today as well) that this hypertrophical concern with religion was not only what held India back from joining the ranks of the modern, scientific, technologically oriented countries, but it was also the cause of the deep disdain the British actually, or in the imagination of the colonized, harbored against India's culture and population.

During the past five to seven decades, partly due to the pizza-effect, Hinduism has come into its own again in the minds of the urban alienates. The heritage to which they revert somewhat hesitantly, has been modified, simplified, sometimes bowdlerized by the agents of modern Hinduism: a swami of the Ramakrishna Mission, a model institution of modern urban Hinduism, omitted sections in his translation of a canonical text, because the original contained sexual instructions to husbands and lovers; even hundred and fifty years ago, at the beginning of the Hindu renewal, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, one of its founding fathers, actually changed the text of the scripture to make it less pantheistic and more monotheistic—or, by implication, more similar to the theism of the ruling alien. Vivekananda taught his fellow monks to do social service, and to view the poor as God, service to them as true *pājā*. Mahatma Gandhi plagiarized this portion of Swami Vivekananda's work, albeit to good use. The clash between this recent attitude and the traditional one became evident at the *kumbhamelā*, the grand all-Hindu religious convention of monks and laymen, which takes place every twelfth year near Allahabad: the well dressed, bespectacled, M.A. holding monks of the Ramakrishna Mission were asked to line up far behind in the bathing procession—the central event at the *melā*. Poorly clad, shabby looking, non-English knowing monks took their dip first. Monastic hierarchy is established by the sequence of the holy dip, the most respected orders coming first, the least respected last. When I asked an abbot why the Ramakrishna monks were relegated to the far end, he said 'those people pick up the excrements of the sick—they don't do what sadhus are supposed to do'. The reference, of course, was to the humanitarian and para-medical work the Ramakrishna Mission has been doing for close to eight decades: but this is not what the traditionalist sees as proper action. The king or the rulers give bread, the school and college teachers give worldly knowledge, the doctor and the nurse give health—but the monk gives only divine knowledge—nothing else is his concern. The official culture of India in the 70s sides with the Ramakrishna monks against the abbot's view, and the official culture being that of the small minority which runs India, it will probably prevail in the long run. But that is neither here nor there.

The history of this development is rich and rather easy to trace.[10] When English speaking Hindu leaders vexed with the presumptuousness of Christian missionaries, came to the West around the turn of the century, arousing interest and sympathy among the liberal segments of the occidental countries, they paved the road to a revival in the homeland. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the founders of the Hindu Renaissance, like the illustrious Swami Vivekananda, and his consciously or unconsciously plagiarizing successors, the host of swamis and other Hindu teachers in urban India and in the West, were city-boys, beset with anxieties and low self-esteem and with a puritanism of a degree hardly matched today in another country, East or West.

Though the ascetic traditions of India did, of course, emphasize the importance of sexual continence, the identification of all that is evil with sex—not with perverted sex, but with any sex, married, unmarried, simple or complex—is squarely due to teachings of the said reformers including Gandhi. Not that Hindus have modally less frequent sexual congress than other societies, but none seems to feel as guilty about enjoying it as urban Hindus. When Gandhi was asked what he thought of the beautiful erotic sculptures on ancient Hindu temples, he said 'if I had the power, I would tear them down.'[11] I observed college students visiting Khajuraho, the most extensive and renown temple complex displaying erotic scenes, over a period of a week: all of them were dismayed, shocked, frightened, exclaiming such sagacious words as "nasty nasty nasty—should be forbidden. Should be abolished." Numerous villagers passing by during the same period from surrounding areas, did not show any signs of perturbance—they did their namaste (folding their hands in front of their chest as a token of respect), saying such things as '*wah ji wah kamāl kardiyā*" (roughly 'gee whiz, what a wonderful scene') and leaving without any embarrassment or discomfort. This is what I mean by alienation—the villagers have not experienced it.

It is to a great part due to the perception of sexlessness, or in the pious language of modern Hinduism, of their having conquered the senses, that the sadhus and swamis of modern India have obtained and enhanced their amazing hold over a growing population. At the end of the last century, the status and fame of the mendicant tradition had reached its all time low —it has swung to a new zenith in this decade. The British Indian census reports listed 'sadhus, sannyasins, and beggars' giving their number as close to five million. Today, such grab-bag packeting would be quite unthinkable. Though Hindus still believe and state that sadhus are parasites and leeches on the social body, the status of persons who have achieved religious charisma through the preservation of their semen—this is the quintessential characteristic of the holy man, distinguishing him radically from pious householders and lay contemplatives—is strong and undisputed. The ex-boy saint Bālayogeshvar "Guru Mahārāj,' now thirty years old, lost some two million-followers in India overnight when he got married: not because he married an American woman, nor because he married a woman much older than he, but simply because he married. When this author sent a message from Vienna to Mr. Nehru at the end of World War II reporting that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the most popular and charismatic Indian national leader, killed in action at the end of the War (though still believed to be undying by most Indians today), had a baby daughter in Vienna, it took some ten years or more for the Hindu people to believe it—a great man of such prowess is a *brahmacāri* (i.e., a celibate), for how else could he have generated such personal might and attraction ? How else could he have preserved such heroic qualities ? Modern Hindus identify 'moral' with 'sexually abstemious'. When a Hindu businessman told me that his son had developed 'bad habits,' it meant that he was interested in sex, gambling, and in liquor, in this descending order of demerit. The Indian English use of the verb 'to enjoy' —no object is added to this transitive clause—means exclusively 'to enjoy sex,' and the statement "x enjoys" is meant pejoratively, as a moral criticism.

Though the average urban Hindu does not engage more or less intensively in formal religious activity than the average traditional Hindu discussed earlier, the person who does espouse some kind of religious quest is respected by his peers, just like in the traditional situation. As a seeming paradox, the urban alienate chastises any kind of ritualistic behavior as 'superstitious'; but since this is the behavior of his parents, grand-parents, and of the women in the house, the characterization 'superstitious' is kept vague. Open wrath is expressed only against 'uneducated' village type practices of sorcery, folk-healing, and other 'little tradition' shamanistic practice when they extend into the modern, urban context. Astrology, however, is exempt from this charge on all levels, since it is a 'science'; its advice is sought by this as by all other Hindu and non-Hindu communities. No marriage is arranged without astrological consultation and consent.

Renaissance Hinduism, i.e., modern urban alienate Hinduism is said to be 'scientific,' good for body, mind, and soul.

The resurgent interest in Hinduism in its homeland through the impact of the Hindu Renaissance notwithstanding, it is still the women who dominate the ritualistic sphere in the houses of urbanites, and who carry on the minimal, perennial rites of hearth and home. It is they who also control the rules of demeanor at home. Men of urban India drink, as do other men—women chide them for it. Men play down or ridicule domestic ritual, but not in front of their women; and they would not interfere with it. To the outside world, men would claim that it is good to let women pursue the old ways, because they are uneducated and traditional attitudes are good for the children; to their male peers, they would say that women should not be discouraged from ritualistic pursuit, because it keeps them obedient, it prevents them from becoming 'proud'—'proud' being the urban alienate Hindu English term for critical and analytic when these qualities are seen in women. The psychocultural reality is, however, quite a different matter: urban Hindu males, now even more than before the onset of the Renaissance and the exposure to the pizza-effect, feel guilty about their official claim to have transcended the need for ritual. This explains why men display a joyful zest for ritual once they espouse a modern guru who is 'scientific' and who recommends ritual observance. Women's ritual in the urban Hindu setting does not differ at all from women's ritual in the traditional segments of society discussed above. Even where women join their men in following an urban guru, they do not discard ritual, but would add the newly directed rite to the old, thus indirectly goading the men in the house to become more ritual-minded in their turn. Meat-eating men often become vegetarians in this setting, either under the orders of their guru, or under the reinforced influence of the women co-espousing the modern guru, or when they have made a lot of money. A sort of Protestant Ethic in reverse seems to take effect: when wealth has been generated, men feel that some sort of religious gratitude should be manifested, and the return to vegetarianism is the culturally most obvious way of accomplishing this.

The niche or shrine in the house of the urban Hindus is now adorned with the same calendar art as that of the tradition-bound, but the pictures of the guru or gurus are added. A typical house shrine in Calcutta would display oleographs of Durgā, the tutelary deity of Bengal, of Rāma and Sītā with their retinue, of Shiva with trident and cobra nesting on his neck, of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, and a contemporary guru like Sai Baba or Mā Ānandamayi, a famous Bengali woman-saint. Where husband or wife have their own personal guru, his or her photograph would also sit on the shrine, freshly adorned with flowers every day, incense sticks ignited and burnt in front of the august assembly. The formal worship of these religious figures, human and divine (the distinction is an outsider's distinction—for the teachers *are* divine), differs in intensity and duration, from a simple once a day offering to elaborate *pūjā*, in which the whole family may participate.

Pilgrimage has taken on modernized trappings in the urban setting. Swami Chinmayananda, a famous South Indian English speaking monk who lectures in English only on principle, even when he speaks in his native State of Kerala, has created his own 'Chinmayānanda Yātrā' (Chinmayānanda pilgrimage) train, with the help of Indian Railways. It takes its followers to the various all-India shrines in all parts of the subcontinent, thus giving the urban audience a big edge over the traditionalists, who cannot avail themselves of such highly organized transportation. Once the train has reached a center of pilgrimage, the ritual administered to the pilgrims does not differ in anyway from that extended to all other pilgrims. Once a modern urban reaches a place of pilgrimage, he or she becomes sartorially and physically indistinguishable from the general throng of pilgrims. There has been some rather radical innovation, though: until the coming of the modern swamis, it was not possible for a lowcaste Hindu, and less so for a westerner to enter the sanctum of the more orthodox shrines: the famous swamis have succeeded in bending, if not in eliminating these rules of exclusion. The *dakṣiṇā* (ceremonial fee to *pāndās* and other functionaries) helps, too: urbanites can and do give more than traditionalists, because they are often more affluent.

The agents of religious instruction for the urban Hindu are numerous. The famous and not so famous swamis, *kathā* and *kīrtan* (assemblies with chants, responsoria, the telling of religious stories and mythology), conducted in private homes or in rented halls, mythological movies, religious music on All India Radio, a certain amount of religious chanting and teaching in the media, and a very large array of easily available religious pamphleteering literature in English and the regional language. I have a booklet, which I bought at a sidewalk stall in Old Delhi, containing "Hymns of the Old Teachers and Saints set to the tunes of *Anārkalī* and *Baijū Bāwrā*" (the names of two popular movie classics). The popularization of the gods is part of the Renaissance strategy. At the most important temple to Viṣṇu, the famous Tirupati shrine in Andhra Pradesh, Lata Mangeshkar, the 'playback'[12] movie singer, was invited to sing the sacred incantation a couple of years ago—quite unthinkable only a decade earlier in that citadel of the classic and the pure tradition.

In contrast to all Hindu traditions, the modern Hindu does identify religious with moral behavior. This is due in part to the bequest of the Christian missionaries of the British days, as also to the fact that the religious leaders, the founders of Renaissance

Hinduism had been brought up and schooled by the missionaries and their educational agents. Contact with the West added to this merger of religious and moral ideas. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, is the most impressive example—for him religious behavior meant moral behavior, truth in the moralistic sense was identical to him with God in the theological sense. This was a reversal of traditional Hindu notions. The sophisticated separation of moral and religious concerns, quintessential to traditional learned and folk Hinduism, was not only blurred by the Renaissance, but is seen as nefarious, and as the ideological corollary to 'superstition'.

Some years ago, a young brahmin woman, a graduate student in the social sciences said to me when I showed her the small Hindu shrine I have in my house for my own observances. 'I am not interested in religion'. But a short while after I found out that she had been going to different churches and synagogues every week-end, giving the impression to all but perhaps the synagogue audiences that she was one of theirs. I think this is highly typical and therefore instructive comportment. Anything that is ritualistically weak, that stresses modern values as the Christian and Jewish institutions of worship do, is acceptable, since anything that stresses ritual is 'superstitious,' regardless of the degree of learning and sophistication by which it may be backed. Lest anyone, especially the 'modern', 'scientific' might think that the urban Hindu is, 'superstitious' she or he will prefer to claim that they are *not* interested in religion, assuming that people everywhere, not only in urban India, identify religion with superstition. A year later, I discovered a wreathed picture of Sathya Sai Baba and Swami Vivekananda at the lady's apartment.

The fear of magic, of chthonic sensuality, and of all that goes with grassroots Hinduism, is very powerful indeed, adding to the cognitive dissonance and discomfort experienced by the urban alienate. The desiccated Sunday school type Hinduism of the official culture is seen as innocuous, 'scientific', non-ecstatic, non-obstructive to modern life, hence sympathized with by non-Hindus as 'not too different'.

The urban Hindu feels much more at ease with a Christian preacher, say, from Kansas City, than with a shaman of his own or his parent's native village, with the village pandit or the learned brahmin of the theological academies in Varanasi, Mysore, or Madras, unless a modern guru has been chosen, who happens to be favorably inclined to traditional scholarship—a small percentage of the modern successful swamis are so inclined; their majority rejects them as 'superstitious,' because the modern swamis are themselves very much part of alienated modern urban Hinduism.

The cognitive ideal of urban Hinduism is the *karma-yogī*, a person who is active and successful in the world, but who surrenders the fruits of his labor to divinity. Hindu political leaders, and by infelicitous extension and sheer ignorance such leaders as Hitler,[13] epitomize the *karma-yogin*. Increasingly, sections of the urban audiences look toward the more esoteric types of Hinduism, weakening the *karma-yoga* vogue of the less recent decades of the Renaissance. Followers of Sri Aurobindo and other relatively sophisticated teachers, have begun to reassess the earlier notions, prevalent during the independence struggle and before, verbalized by Swami Vivekananda's famous, though not particularly brilliant dictum that to play a game of football (soccer) is more important for modern Hindus than to read the Bhagavadgītā. These people have begun to identify with less sociocentric and more experimentative meditations, thus conversing to the classical traditions of a radical break with the empirical world and with society. Still, one may project that the Hinduism at the end of this century will resemble the sort of Sunday-school type, deritualized, puritanical ways of urban alienate Hinduism of our day, since it is the agents of this section which create the official modes of instruction and communication.

REFERENCES

[1] This is Prof. Clifford Geertz's anthropological definition of religion, accepted by most anthropologists and sociologists who study religious behavior.

[2] All the works of the late Prof. S. Radhakrishnan, second President of India, fall in this apologetic category. Virtually all English speaking Hindus, who are not scholars in this field echo this sentiment.

[3] The *Manusmṛti*, and the enormous bulk of the Hindu jurisprudential literature, postulate and teach different moral and juridical behavior for different castes. There are no 'universal rights'.

[4] One of the many terms for a brahmin in Vedic literature is *goghnaḥ* 'one for whom a cow is butchered', i.e., as an offer of hospitality. Nothing irks Hindu traditionalists more than the historically true statement that beef was freely consumed in ancient India, until about 600 BC, by all castes. Today, beef-eating castes are the lowest and most highly polluted.

[5] Modern, 'England' or 'America'-returned Hindus often eat beef, and westernized people in general do not object to it. Few women in these small, but influential groups, however, do.

This model was explained in Hindu Views of Life, q.v.

[6] The eleventh day after the new and the full moon.

[7] Personal communication. In slightly different formulation, this statement is made by many modern Hindus, particularly those that have been exposed to Gandhian thought.

[8] This is, of course, in line with Geertz's definition of religion (note 1). Such undertakings have to be seen as a contract between the client, i.e., the prospective pilgrim and the patron, the god to whom pilgrimage is vowed. It has nothing to do with piety. See my article on *pilgrimage Sites*, *bibliography*.

[9] It is also very technical; hence the standard works on *jajmāni* by Th. Beidelman and others have not been included in the bibliography. The works of Mckim Marriott, Dumont, and Mandelbaum contain brief accounts of the system.

[10] See my article "The Hindu Renaissance and its apologetic Patterns," *bibliography*.

[11] Personal communication from the late M.N. Roy, Dehra Dun, May, 1951.

[12] The Indian-English term for prescoring; no Indian movie actors or actresses do their own singing on screen. Lata Mangeshkar has sung all the female songs in close to a thousand movies, and some two thousand of her records have been printed and sold by the millions to the millions. Lata Mangeshkar is to any authentic Indian singer what Doris Day is to Maria Callas.

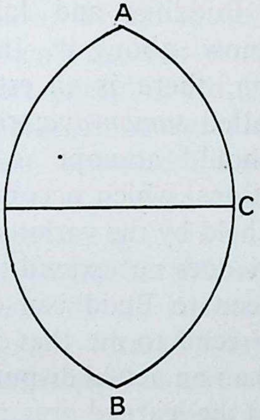
[13] See my article on "Hindu Scholars, Germany, and the Third Reich," *bibliography*.

CHAPTER 4

So'hi Allah Wahi Rām?—The Anthropology of the Hindu-Muslim Interface

In the Hindu tradition, a scholar is supposed to combine sweet speech (*priyabhāṣaṇa*) with true speech (*satyabhāṣaṇa*), but fortunately, none of the acharyas of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions took this counsel very seriously. Modern urban Hindus talk about religious tolerance, and spokesmen of the Hindu Renaissance–Dr. Bhagawan Dass and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, to mention only the two most famous–spent much of their energy in what I call 'essential unity' speech and writing.[1] It would be wrong, though, to say that this part of official culture talk was based on a stratagem of sweetness. Polemics against the missionary and the Christian claim to universal validity of Christian and Muslim teachings check out in this literature. Bhagawan Dass and Radhakrishnan etc., were rhetorically sophisticated—they knew that the superiority of the Hindu teaching could not be respectably established by transferring the Christian or Muslim universality claim to Hinduism, but by establishing and elaborating the basic tolerance of Hinduism, thereby implying its superiority to the other two competing religions. I analyzed this syndrome in criticism of Dr. Radhakrishnan;[2] there I pointed out that the Advaita monists a la Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan said that all schools of Hindu thought and practice were valid, and that one had to go through all these states, until one finally attained the ultimate monistic knowledge. This implies that the latter is superior. Mutatis mutandis, urban "essential unity" Hinduism which includes the sermon of the English speaking swamis in India and abroad—states that all religions are equal, but implies that since Hinduism is 'scientific' and tolerant, it incorporates what all other religions teach, and is hence at least a *primus inter pares*. In the dialectic of 'essential unity' Hinduism, there is no concern with a balanced vision of any of the religions juxtaposed. So when urban Hindu teachers from Vivekananda to Radhakrishnan and to the assorted swamis of our decade say that Hinduism is more tolerant than Christianity and Islam, they refer (mostly unbeknown to themselves) to some pre-Islamic forms of popular Hinduism, as codified in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Purāṇas; and compare it with the more zealous proselytizing forms of both Islam and Christianity. There is no doubt, clearly, that the teacher of the Bhagavadgītā, an eclectic himself, is more tolerant of others (especially of those that do not yet exist, i.e., Islam and Christianity) than, say, the Muslim proselytizers under the first Moghuls or the early evangelical missionaries. But this isn't saying very much. There is no *practical* reason why the 'essential unity' Hindu spokesmen should pick the cantankerous acharyas of the scholastic Hindu traditions (Rāmānuja spent a lot of writing power in insulting the monists, and Mādhava about as much on saying nasty things about both the monists and brands of dualists other than himself, etc.) and the syncretistic sufis of Iran and India presenting comparisons between Hinduism and the non-indigenous religions.

In surveying the Hindu-Muslim interface in India today, we see a simple convex lens model in which the



diametrical points of a continuum coalesce: on the village-grassroots little tradition levels (a) and the opposite urban-modern "great traditions" (B) level there is tolerance *of sorts*, of Islam and Christianity; on the scholarly, traditional, Sanskritic "great tradition" level (C), there is no tolerance of outside views. The polemic between various schools of indigenous Indian thought, Intra-Hindu, or Hindu vs. Buddhist and Jain, is part of the homiletic equipment of all teachers in any of the indigenous traditions. The question arises of whether this implies, *a fortiori*, a rejection of alien teachings (Islam, Christianity), or whether there is a special type of polemic toward the ideological aliens, among the pandits of the indigenous traditions. This hasn't been researched, to my knowledge, but my hunch is that there is no such dialectic. I can speak with authority only for the Hindu acharya's position: he makes it quite clear that he does not dispute theological points with anyone who does not accept the Veda as authority. This stance, however, is somewhat rhetorical, since up to this very day, pandits write and teach against Buddhist and Jaina doctrine, or whatever they know about it. Inside the Hindu scholastic tradition, there is an established rule, or rather guideline called *samanvaya*; roughly, it means that disputants should attempt to find a common formula, or solutions which accommodate as many points as possible held by the various discussants. But the *samanvaya* rule does not extend to Islam, since it does not even extend to Buddhism or Jainism. And again, here too it seems to me that it is a pious admonition rather than an actual disputational strategy. We shall return to the learned grassroots views about Islam a bit later. First, we have to check out Hindu visions of Muslims and of Islam serially, and true to anthropological traditions, I shall start on the micro-level, the village.

In Kashmir villages, we have got a laboratory situation: over 95% of the population is Muslim, and among them, the majority are descendants of converts to Islam from Sārasvat brahmins. T.N. Madan[3] reports that the modal relation between Muslims and Pandits is friendly in a somewhat superficial manner; it is certainly of a commercial and economic type, and there is clearly a jajmāni-type relation in most of the villages between pandit patrons (*yajmān*) and Muslim clients (*kāmin*). While *jajmāni* relations are defined as ritualistic by most anthropologists working in all-Hindu or all-Muslim villages, the term 'ritualistic' has to be used with caution. There is no interdining, not even during festivals, except for such shop-originated snacks as tea, pān, and sweets which are ritualistically neutral. There was a lot of sexual congress between pandit men and Muslim women, but not vice versa: a clear example of exploitation, since the pandit minority owned much of the land and most of the movable wealth. There is no intermarriage, of course, but that isn't different from any other regional setting in India, except in a tiny urban minority of alienated sophisticates in colleges, among movie stars, and among other urbanites. The only grassroots exception is found in the world of music—for here all along intermarriage was quite frequent (Ravi Shankar was married to Ali Akbar Khan's sister), and the teacher-disciple relationship has moved freely across Muslim-Hindu lines virtually from the days of Tansen, himself a brahmin convert to Islam, and the founding father of classical North Indian music. But among the Kashmiris, there is complete mutual exclusion on the ideological level, paralleled by two totally separate social orders. It is my hunch that where there is a Muslim majority in any specific region (Kashmir, Bangladesh), there is a more rigid ideological separation than where Muslims form a minority. From this it would follow that ideological convergence, tolerance, and some degree of adaptation are strengthened when there is a Hindu majority, while social-stratification convergence, tolerance, and adaptation are weakened where there is a Hindu minority.

The somewhat senescent 'Great Tradition-Little Traditions' warhorse can still be mounted with some caution,[4] and I don't see how we can avoid it when we talk about the Hindu-Muslim interface on the village level. Apart from the exceptional case of Kashmir, where Hindus form a minute minority, and where ideological separation is so rigid as not to permit doctrinal and ritualistic elements to diffuse from the one community to the other, we find that the Little Traditions of the subcontinent have provided a rich soil for such mutual penetration and diffusion, strongly impeded or prevented only where the influence of a Great Tradition setting was excessively strong through proximity, e.g., the Ārya Samāj in north-western India, or the presence of institutions of the *'ulema*, say in the area around Deoband, Aligarh, etc. Where no such direct pressure to conform to Great Tradition models is present, or where it is weak due to geographical distance from the centers, the interpenetration of Hindu and Muslim elements of ritual and belief is virtually ubiquitous.

The most obvious pattern, to the anthropologist doing field work, is the presence of many village tutelary gods (*ḍih*) of Muslim provenience in Hindu villages. Thus, my colleague Dr. Susan Wadley found a Khan Bahadur as the village *ḍih* in the Karimpur area; in that village, properly Hindu *kuldevatās* were clearly subservient to the chief deity, Khan Bahadur. Dr. T.N. Pandey reported about a village in the Chunar area near Varanasi, where two ḍihs, Hanumān and Pīr Hassan shared tutelary suzerainty over a village. In these villages in quite distant parts of Northern India, there were less than twenty-five Muslim families in each, in village populations of 200 and 600 households respectively. There was also a *mātā* in that same village. Both Hindus and Muslims worshipped at both shrines—the Muslim practitioner at the *mātā* shrine, in addition to the shrine of Khan Bahadur. The brahmin did some basic Sanskrit invocation at the Khan Bahadur shrine, and some more elaborate pūjā at that of the *mātā*. While pandits in the city would shrug such events off as uninformed and unimportant, the 'ulema doctors of course take grave objection to this flagrant occurance of *śirk*—double-*śirk* to be exact, though when it comes to the sinful setting up of partners for Allah, it doesn't really make much difference whether the partner is a Muslim saint or a Hindu goddess. But this kind of learned antagonism hardly ever reaches the village. On the level of confrontation, great and little traditions simply cannot interact where their respective agents don't meet physically.

The official version of Hindu-Muslim village relations is that of the Hindi (read Urdu) movies with a message—not some real classics like the late Balraj Sahni's *Garam Hawa*, but the average of post-independence sanctimonious stories with *Hindu Muslim bhāī bhāī* content; the stuff children read in their school texts, and foreigners are told by tourist guides—Hindus and Muslims, in village and town alike, get along—they participate in each other's festivals, they invite each other, and they observe each other's holidays. This is the apologetic of public information in India. As such it is important as part of the emic representations of modern India, to itself and to the outside world. Just how much these visions actually coincide with real village behavior is, of course, quite a different matter. While it is a fact that Muslims 'play Holi' during that Hindu festival, interacting with one another as they may do with Hindu villagers on that occasion, and while Hindu villagers visit a *melā* during Muharram, they do not usually do those things which are analytically interesting to the anthropologist. First, they do not intermarry; secondly, they do not interdine with ritualistically relevant food (i.e., the wheat or rice staples). There is a very complex, subtle degree of ritualistic interaction, and this is a topic that merits a fat and good anthology by now—there isn't any, and I would hope that this booklet might generate the seed for one.

I have already spoken about the Muslim originated village *Dih* (tutelary Deity). On a much grander scale and straddling the little traditions-great traditions fence if you will, there are regional shrines quite diffusely present in India, where specialists and pilgrims are quite conscious of the ritualistic and mythological duality involved. The shrine of Baba Qalandar Shah-cum-Dattatreya[5] is the most fascinating one I know of. In the Chikmagalur District of Mysore, high up in the hills, this shrine is dedicated to Dattātreya, and linked with the Hindu mythological complex of Anusūyā and Dattātreya, the sage who was about to be cuckolded by Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The *mahant* is a Muslim with the title *bābā* or *pīr*, and the story goes that when the last Hindu *mahant*, a brahmin, was about to die, he wanted to pass on the mantra and the shrine to a successor; since the only person around at that time was a Muslim boy selling milk, he grabbed and appointed him for the exalted purpose. Ever since, the *mahant* has been a Muslim. The mantra he uses is a garbled Sanskrit-cum-garbled Arabic polysyllable,[5] and when visitors leave the shrine they bow and walk backwards toward the entrance, facing the shrine as they withdraw—a purely Muslim mode of venerational comportment. The *prasād* given by the *mahant* consists of all the items Hindu *prasāds* in the area do (pieces of plantain, sugar, coconut, and milk on a plantain leaf), and it is received and consumed by Hindus of all castes including brahmins. Hindu visitors outnumber Muslims by about three to one. This, to my knowledge, is the only place, at least in the highly orthopractical South, where brahmins accept a food prestation from a Muslim. This locally and regionally important, and well known shrine is never mentioned in the "official culture" literature, nor is it adduced in *Hindu Muslim bhāī bhāī* parlance. I think the reason is that the official diction of modern Hinduism is radically anti-ritualistic,[6] and such reference is felt to be highly embarrassing to the regional spokesmen for the official culture as the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission Centre in nearby Bangalore.

Movements which fossilized within the Hindu ideological and ritualistic body-politic between the 14th and 17th century A.C. were Hindu-Muslim-eclectic, and some of their founders were bona fide Muslims. I am thinking of Kabīr in the first place. His paramonastic order, the Kabīrpanthis, is now regarded as a Hindu order, no doubts entertained by anyone—to wit the criterial fact that the Kabīrpanthis take their regular place in the *julūs* (procession) at the Kumbhamelā, the chief Hindu monastic convention in India. Verses by Kabīr are contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, and Nānak himself emphasized, sartorially and in the text, a well formulated Hindu-Muslim synthesis.[7]

The most important shrine in Sri Lanka, for Great Tradition Buddhism at least, is of course the Maligawa Dalada (Temple of the Tooth) in Kandy. But ask any Ceylonese where the real power lies, and he will name Kataragama.[8] Not only do Muslims (and Christians) visit the shrine together with Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, but they have a small mosque right on the site. A Moor pilgrim[9] told me "for the usual things, for the welfare of our families, and for the afterlife, of course, we pray to Allah and do the *namāz*; but when things go wrong, or when we want something special, Kataragama is the only correct address." Wasn't that *Śirk*, setting up a partner for Allah, I asked ? "Allah is merciful," was the somewhat cryptic answer. Kataragama is a powerful, sexy, reckless god, the son of Śiva and Śakti, and of course identical with Subbramaniya or Skanda. Muslims, just like Buddhists and Hindus, take up *kāvaḍi*,[10] walk over fire, and pierce their tongues and cheeks with skewers to fulfill their vows to the god. The shaman-type functionaries of the god (*kapurāla*) are either Tamil Hindus or (mostly today) Buddhists; they administer equally to all who come, and that means *literally* all people in Sri Lanka who have special problems, not to be solved by other powers. By the great—little tradition taxonomy, all this is little tradition, but I would like to call it "big little tradition"; anyone who has been there will have shared my feeling of the total numinosity of the shrine. I asked some twenty people during the festival, "Is he a Hindu god ?" And the answers were "Yes, he is Subbramaniya"—thus some Hindus; but all the others, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians, said "We don't know what god he is. We only know that he helps like no one else," or words to that effect. Due to the official dominance of Theravāda Buddhism in the area, Hindu-Muslim participatory identities are not polarized as they are in the case of Baba Qualandar Shah-Dattātreya in Mysore.

Many years ago E.J. Harper of Seattle edited a book *Religion in South Asia*.[11] I cannot find the review, and I hope its author will help me. In it Professor Cantwell Smith asked whether that was all there was to the great religions of South Asia: some shamans, some witches, some little shrines—where was the overarching *mysterium tremendum ?*

Well, Harper was an anthropologist, and I must say that *qua* anthropologist I enjoy the normativists' discomfort—observing what people do is quite a different thing from reading what their teachers told them to do—and to think. When it comes to the study of Hindu-Muslim interaction, this approach may be less inspiring than *so'hi Allah wahi Rām*, but it is more factual, hence analytically more valid *in rebus personarum.*

Since South Asia provides the arch paradigm for endogamy, commensality, and trade exclusiveness in its caste-structure,[12] we can check off rather easily how different religious communities interact on these sociologically seminal levels: Hindus and Sikhs intermarry freely in the Panjab, the only consideration being caste—Ramgarhia Sikhs marry Ramgarhia Hindus quite freely, with no questions asked; Jat Sikhs marry Jat Hindus rather less frequently, with some questions asked, but nevertheless they do. Hindus and Jains intermarry quite freely in the Gujarat, Rajasthan, and other areas, along caste lines; the large number of banyā (*marwāri*) *jātis* intermarry with most Jains, since most Jains are classed, and class themselves as *banyās* or *vaiśyas*, when they choose the somewhat misleading, Sanskritized term; the *kṣattriya* provenience of the Jains is treated as it ought to be, as a myth—no Hindu Rajput marries a Jain "*Kṣattriya*" because there are no Jain Kṣattriyas. But no Hindus of any *jāti* marry any Hindus of any Muslim *qaum*—the official theme of Rajput princesses marrying Moghul rulers belongs to the realms of history and literature, neither of which are my concern here.

As to commensality, here the regional caste rules obtain quite rigidly: in the village, Hindus and

Muslims do not eat ritualistically relevant food together—and low caste Hindus do not accept *kaccā* food from Muslims even if the latter's intra-regional caste status is higher. I do not know if Muslims have any such restrictions in any rural area. A sweeper woman in Varanasi was offered a *parānṭha* by my barber during a 'feast' in the Radhakrishnan Hostel on the BHU campus. "We don't take food from these people," she said, "we are Muslims by caste" (*ham Muslim jāt ke hain*).

I now proceed to the area marked (c) on the diagram—the level of learned, great-tradition grassroots Hinduism. Its personnel is much easier to tabulate—the categories involved are quite clearcut, unlike the case of the fuzzy shaman-curer-ritualist continuum on the little-traditions level. Also, these are all-India categories, easily spotted and named by everyone in the subcontinent: the pandit (*purohit*, *śāstri*, priest) who handles all the Vedic, the life crisis, calendrical ritual and the rites of passage, mostly as full time practitioners; the sadhu, sannyāsi, monk, holy man; and as a last category partly overlapping with the priest, the indigenous scholars of Sanskritic religious lore. The Islāmic scholars here will no doubt be able to show where there is some functional convergence in the Muslim religious personnel of the subcontinent; but the fact that there is no ritual per se that requires a specialist, makes a passable taxonomy somewhat less complex in great tradition Islam, I would think.

The attitudes entertained by Hindu great tradition personnel toward *Islam* is quite distinct from their attitude about *Muslims*. One might put it in the aphorismic diction: Hindu scholars (brahmins, monks, śāstris) don't like Islam, but they do not object to

Muslims. I am not talking about Hindu fascist political activists—for although they are potentially powerful, they do not represent the modal attitude toward Islam and Muslims. To the learned professionals of Hinduism, Muslim populations form castes, i.e., social units like all other social units. They rank as clean śūdras, or in the case of highly polluting occupations like leather work, as untouchables – not because they are Muslims, but because of the inherent defilement of such occupations. In other words, the Hindu pandit does not usually view a Muslim cobbler with any more or any less interest, concern, respect, or disrespect, than he treats a Hindu cobbler. And he often treats a learned Muslim divine, a *maulvī*, as intellectually respectable. Swami Muktananda, one of the foremost non-English-speaking internationally known high-power sadhus, narrates the same story in each and every talk, at least in America (I caught him doing it in Seattle, and in Albuquerque several weeks later, and it was reported to me unsolicitedly from his appearance in New York City)—about Mullah Nasruddin and the duck soup.[13] True wisdom, so the pandit feels, is not the prerogative of the brahmin and his cohorts; śāstric knowledge, of course, is. Islam, as *śāstra*, is regarded by the Hindu learned specialist as a possibly revealed text, but of a much lower cognitive order than the Veda and its tradition. I have heard pandits refer to the Qur'an as *videśi smṛti* "foreign noncanonical religious literature," but I have never heard any pandit use a derogatory term like *kāfir* or even *mlecch* for Muslim texts, though the term *mlecch* is indeed used by Sanskritic experts to refer to Muslims, especially to the Muslims of the period of conquest. *Mlecch rājya*, in pandit-parlance, is virtually synonymous with the Moghul rule; it could, in theory, be extended to include the British, but somehow the term used for that period is usually *Angrezī*, or *vilāyati rāj* by pandits on a *śāstrārtha*[14] forum. Since every Hindu scholar, monastic, sacerdotal, and lay, identifies with a particular tradition (*paraṁparā*) within the Hindu doctrine, he automatically ranks every other tradition either as about equal to his own, in some very few cases higher than his own, and mostly beneath his own. A pandit of the *smārta* section of Southern brahmins following the tradition inaugurated by Śaṃkarācārya in the 8th century, regards the other Vedantic traditions (of Rāmānuja, Mādhvācārya, and perhaps Vallabha) as slightly beneath his own; he regards the *bhakta* traditions, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, as considerably lower in value and worth, the tantric and Buddhist traditions as the lowest; and he would rank Islamic traditions (he would not distinguish between any schools within Islam) somewhere along the penultimate and the last, i.e., between some very lowly orthodox monotheistic and the anti-establishmentarian, non- or anti-Vedic traditions.

I do not know what transpired at the Court of Akbar, where pandits reportedly argued with Muslim scholars; indology and history can no doubt tell us about it. But in today's learned Hindu society, Islamic teachings, together with Christian, Parsee, and Buddhist teachings, are simply not seen as ideological competitors. At an important monastic assembly in Amritsar, in 1953 one Panjabi sadhu, well liked by a large number of Hindus in that area and in Delhi, used rather stylish Urdu for his *upadeś*.[15] The next day the Arya Samaji participants, referring to a point made by the *sanātani* sannyasi monks, distributed a pamphlet which said "we are not concerned with sadhus who know only some Urdu and Persian jokes (*jo sirf Urdu aur Fārsi ke cutkule jānte hain*); we are concerned with real scholars, not with sadhus who act and talk like some Muslim *pīr-s.*" One of the assumptions of learned grassroots Hindus is that what has been spoken or written about in matters of proper Hindu *dharma*, must have been spoken or written about in good Sanskrit. It is for this reason, among others, that Buddhism is not taken seriously—I remember the long fights the late Franklin Edgerton used to have with the pandits at Varanasi when he taught Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit: no such thing, they claimed—it is just *bad* Sanskrit, and what can you expect of people who eat meat ! (a double slug at Edgerton *and* the Buddhists). My feeling is that had any Muslim treatise been written in good Sanskrit, the pandits would have taken it seriously and incorporated it into some sort of *śāstrārtha* setting.

On the ideological side, of course, matters are less open to guesses. Professor Ninian Smart said very aptly[16] that systems in India which stressed the personal tend to lose status *in the long run*; systems which deemphasize the personal and stress the abstract, impersonal, gain higher prestige in the long run. This is quite true among the Hindu great tradition segments where they co-exist regionally; it is also borne out by the only hierarchically structured event in Hinduism, the *kumbhamelā* at Allahabad (which takes place every 12th year, at Allahabad, Nasik, and Hardvar), where the orders belonging to the abstract traditions (advaitins, udāsins, nāgas), dip first, and the *bhakti* organizations, monastic and paramonastic, form the rear of the procession which consummates and concludes the *melā*.

I think the condescending attitude Hindu scholars entertain about Islam, has to do with their notion—not refuted by any Muslim scholars entering into a learned argument with pandits—that Islamic theology is anthropomorphic, personalistic. Now the argument against this notion tends to be naive, even when it is erudite. Aziz Ahmad, in his important book, praised by Professor Schimmel on its dustjacket bespeaks this learned naivete when he writes "Hindu genius flowers in the concrete and the iconographic; the Muslim mind is on the whole atomistic, abstract, geometrical, and iconoclastic."[17] This juxtaposition simply does not apply either in the emic repertoire of the pandits, not in the etic analysis of the comparativist. Compared to the notions of Advaita Vedānta, as represented by smārta-brahmins and by the most respected of all monastic orders, the Order of Śaṃkarācārya, any *'ulema* stated notion of divinity is personalistic; God is a He, not an it, regardless of the linguistic fact that the Arab article makes no gender distinction. The epithets of God are felt to be highly personalistic by the pandits, and god is a father rather than also a mother (which would be better) or an it (which would be best). Now it is quite irrelevant that some Muslim sects, the Naqśbandi for instance, and certainly the writings of Al 'Arabi outside India, produced impersonalistic, monistic teachings. It is the *perception* of a corpus that counts in the behavioral context, not the actual content of a teaching. Elementary, my dear Watson.

Let me move on to the urban alienates—the people who are few in number compared to village Indians, but who run the land on all levels that count, in a modernistic managerial sense. I am now talking about the people in the cities who use English. For this purpose, the knowledge of English in the urban Indian operational context is, like vegetarianism among Hindus and virginity anywhere, not a matter of degree. Once the urbanite in South Asia 'knows' English, regardless of how ill or how well, he does certain things relevant to our analysis, which he could not do if he knew no English at all: he reads English language Hinduism which is not 'popular' Hinduism, since that term has to be reserved for the little tradition grassroots, i.e., largely rural Hinduism discussed earlier. I prefer to simply call it "urban alienate" Hinduism, alienated that is from all forms of grassroots Hinduism which urban alienates tag as 'superstition'. They either have read, or have heard people who read the pamphlet Hinduism,[18] Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Aurobindo, the modern swamis, and in Sri Lanka, Anagarika Dharmapala. They listen, personally or vicariously, to the ever swelling host of swamis who speak English and whose effect is far more powerful on them than that of the learned monks who are physically present, but whose clientele is elitist, and highly selective. In addition, the urban alienates watch and marvel at the illiterate, or almost illiterate saint magicians, Sathya Sai Baba foremost among them today. Urban alienate Hinduism, on the ideological level, is a blend of English-speaking-sadhu Hinduism inaugurated by Vivekananda at the turn of the century, and of the impact of the magician charismatic on the affective level. Take Sathya Sai Baba of Putaparthi in the Karnatak. He is seen, and probably believes himself to be an incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, a Muslim Sufi saint in Sindh in the late 19th century. Putaparthy Sai Baba is a brahmin by birth, and his espousal of a Muslim as his metempsy-

I think the condescending attitude Hindu scholars entertain about Islam, has to do with their notion—not refuted by any Muslim scholars entering into a learned argument with pandits—that Islamic theology is anthropomorphic, personalistic. Now the argument against this notion tends to be naive, even when it is erudite. Aziz Ahmad, in his important book, praised by Professor Schimmel on its dustjacket bespeaks this learned naivete when he writes "Hindu genius flowers in the concrete and the iconographic; the Muslim mind is on the whole atomistic, abstract, geometrical, and iconoclastic."[17] This juxtaposition simply does not apply either in the emic repertoire of the pandits, not in the etic analysis of the comparativist. Compared to the notions of Advaita Vedānta, as represented by smārta-brahmins and by the most respected of all monastic orders, the Order of Śaṃkarācārya, any *'ulema* stated notion of divinity is personalistic; God is a He, not an it, regardless of the linguistic fact that the Arab article makes no gender distinction. The epithets of God are felt to be highly personalistic by the pandits, and god is a father rather than also a mother (which would be better) or an it (which would be best). Now it is quite irrelevant that some Muslim sects, the Naqśbandi for instance, and certainly the writings of Al 'Arabi outside India, produced impersonalistic, monistic teachings. It is the *perception* of a corpus that counts in the behavioral context, not the actual content of a teaching. Elementary, my dear Watson.

Let me move on to the urban alienates—the people who are few in number compared to village Indians, but who run the land on all levels that count, in a modernistic managerial sense. I am now talking about the people in the cities who use English. For this purpose, the knowledge of English in the urban Indian operational context is, like vegetarianism among Hindus and virginity anywhere, not a matter of degree. Once the urbanite in South Asia 'knows' English, regardless of how ill or how well, he does certain things relevant to our analysis, which he could not do if he knew no English at all: he reads English language Hinduism which is not 'popular' Hinduism, since that term has to be reserved for the little tradition grassroots, i.e., largely rural Hinduism discussed earlier. I prefer to simply call it "urban alienate" Hinduism, alienated that is from all forms of grassroots Hinduism which urban alienates tag as 'superstition'. They either have read, or have heard people who read the pamphlet Hinduism,[18] Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Aurobindo, the modern swamis, and in Sri Lanka, Anagarika Dharmapala. They listen, personally or vicariously, to the ever swelling host of swamis who speak English and whose effect is far more powerful on them than that of the learned monks who are physically present, but whose clientele is elitist, and highly selective. In addition, the urban alienates watch and marvel at the illiterate, or almost illiterate saint magicians, Sathya Sai Baba foremost among them today. Urban alienate Hinduism, on the ideological level, is a blend of English-speaking-sadhu Hinduism inaugurated by Vivekananda at the turn of the century, and of the impact of the magician charismatic on the affective level. Take Sathya Sai Baba of Putaparthi in the Karnatak. He is seen, and probably believes himself to be an incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, a Muslim Sufi saint in Sindh in the late 19th century. Putaparthy Sai Baba is a brahmin by birth, and his espousal of a Muslim as his metempsychotic forbear has no positive or dysfunctional effect whatever upon his status with highcaste Hindus, or with anyone else. Of his estimated ten million followers in India, roughly 75% are urban alienates; therest belong to all the other sectors discussed in this book, including some very learned brahmins and monks.

In surveying some three dozen urban alienate literature pamphlets,[19] the following emerged as the modal attitude about Islam: (not about Muslims—the concluding paragraph will deal with that point): Islam is a good religion. It teaches reverence for God, it stresses the oneness of God, it has no place for superstitions, it teaches brotherhood, it rejects the caste system and other 'fissiparous tendencies'. It does not, however, provide a scientific way of realizing God as does yoga and meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism; it regards God as a father as do the Christians, and has therefore no place for those many who can worship God only as mother or in some other fashion. It does not see that there are prophets at all times, and that Muhammad is only one of them, Krishna, Rāma, Jesus, Zoroaster etc., being others, and more to come. (It is *quite* unimportant, again, that some Shi'a groups like the Ismailis do indeed believe that their Hazir Imām is the Prophet of this age, etc.,—this knowledge is not part of the pamphlet Hinduism's perception of Islam). Further on the debit side, Islam does not provide different routes to people with different *adhikāra* (spiritual talent)—unlike Hinduism which has many roads to the same goal. In other words, Islam is not scientific. Hinduism is. Islam also does not stress purity (i e., sexlessness and vegetarianism) like Hinduism. It does stress abstention from alcohol more than Hinduism, and that is good. It is not tolerant like Hinduism, and wants to convert people—that is bad. *So'hi Allah wahi Rām* is a neo-Hindu pamphlet type adage—lets not forget it was *not* coined by Tulsidās like the rest of the *bhajan*, but by Gandhi, who loved to quote the eclectic medieval saints' *Rām Rahīm* dicta. It is here that you see what I called 'the tolerance of sorts' shared by audiences A and B in the diagram, a convergence both on the cognitive and the affective levels. There is no such tolerance on level C.

The view of the urban alienate Hindus of Muslims is modally stereotypic and more negative than that of the level C audience. The stereotypes are: Muslims are not physically very clean; they don't bathe as often as do Hindus (i.e., the famous *juma juma* 'joke,' in no way more brilliant than the tedious *sardār* jokes); they eat meat and are therefore naturally polluted. And they marry their sisters; the latter stereotype, of course, is simply an emically true statement of the fact that Muslims have preferred parallel cousin marriage, whereas the north Indian Hindu kinship organization, of Hawaiian type, identifies both parallel and cross-cousin as brother and sister. The fact that Dravidian Hindus practice preferred crosscousin and uncle niece marriage (i.e. Dr. Radhakrishnan was married to his maternal niece), is not known to the stereotyping Hindus.

The typical self-image of the Indian and Pakistani Muslim vis-a-vis the conceived Hindu alter-image, and its possible expression in an ideological interface with Hindus, is that there is no *jāt-pāt*, i.e., no caste distinction among Muslims. Etically speaking, this is wrong. There is a fair amount of literature on Muslim caste. The most recent, though somewhat limited in scope, is Saghir Ahmad's article in the *Contributions to Indian Sociology.*[20] He believes that a Marxist reinterpretation of the stratificational configuration in the Muslim village is preferable to the traditional caste interpretations of South Asianist anthropologists; yet when he has done that, he hasn't said anything new, and his attempt to show that *qaum* is not the functional synonym of *jāti*, is not convincing at all.

Adrian Mayer, now head of the anthropology department at the London School of Oriental and African Studies, anticipating or responding to objections by Indian Muslim colleagues, wrote "I use the word 'caste' here advisedly. For these Muslim groups are endogamous and have many customs quite foreign to Islam, though consistent with their caste customs before conversion. The people of these castes are conscious of this, and distinguish themselves and other similar Muslim castes (Mewati, Naita etc.), from those they call 'Musalman' (Shekh, Sayyid, Moghul, and Pathan)."[21]

On the ideological side, Indian Muslims have no doubt an edge over Hindus when it comes to a contemporary, especially the urban interface: for regardless of the sociological fact of Muslim caste, a non-caste value-orientation is sufficiently interiorized by Muslims to present themselves as free from it, when Hindus have to rally a considerable amount of eclectic dialog (the *panthi*-and other medieval North Indian bhakti cults, The Arya Samaj, Gandhi etc.), and must generate efforts to select those portions and passages of the Hindu tradition which play down the *varṇa*-orientation. Caste by what you do and how you live rather than caste by birth—this is the central stance, and texts can be selected or ignored to support the one or the other position. Muslims need no such ingenuity, and no such extra effort, since the

Muslim *teaching* has no notion of caste. The more articulate Hindus and Muslims are aware of this clear advantage the latter has had in a Hindu-Muslim dialog.

Outside the spoken and written dialectic, however, matters are much more complex and equivocal. Muslims tend to *act*, on the grassroots level and above, in line with Hindu concepts of purity. The reverse is not the case. Vegetarianism, and the general moral preference for low protein diets, is emulated by Muslims. Thus, Jinnah's obiter dictum "Hindus worship cow, I eat cow," was a statement of double dissimulation. First, if he ate cow, he did so because he liked it, *pace* London steak house, *not* because he wanted to do something Hindus abhorred. Second, if he ate cow, he also ate pork, very likely, much as the Nehrus didn't eat beef in public, but added it into their luncheon at regular intervals, and certainly when they travelled abroad. Had Jinnah been a grassroots Muslim leader and not a worsted-tweed upper-class barrister, he would not have eaten beef or pork—pork because a Muslim mustn't, and it would therefore be abhorrent to him; and he wouldn't have eaten beef, because it was abhorrent to him as it is to all caste Hindus—eating beef, to him, would give him anxiety, not of a religious kind, but of a social status kind—he would feel identified as a chamar or some other outcaste person (not Muslim or Hindu, but person).

Again, Westernization works bilaterally subsequent to consummated Sanskritization, with Muslims and Hindus: caste-Hindus and brahmins don't eat meat, especially not beef; westernized Brahmins, unless they have been spiritualized through the pizza effect or through some degree of Gandhiization, or for any number of reasons (promises to mother at home etc., aesthetic revulsion at the sight of meat, etc.), may eat beef.[22] As to women, cut the meat-eating incidence for the same groups by 80%. Westernized Muslims, unless they have been spiritualized through the pizza effect[23] (i.e., Muslim followers of Aurobindo, T.M., even Hare Krishna), do eat beef and often pork—but they don't when eating in an actually or potentially public Indian context. Westernization presupposes Sanskritization; and Sanskritization is an all-South Asia syndrome shared by Hindus, Muslims and others.

Spear reports that during the Mutiny of 1857, the Emperor took care that the Muslims did not sacrifice cows for the feast of Id-ul-Zuha.[24] Louis Dumont[25] interprets this as a degree of compromise Muslims had to make in a symbiosis with Hindus, even when the former were politically sovereign; but I think that compromise was engendered not so much, or not only by a feeling that one has to come to terms with the politically subservient majority. All Muslims remembered that their ancestors not too long ago were converts from Hinduism. Conceivably, converts may try to wipe out ideological traces of their erstwhile fealties, and this is no doubt what many Indian converts to Islam did. But it is quite another thing to eradicate value orientations introjected over many centuries through many generations, which are not articulated except by very few highly introspective people, and of course, by sneaky social scientists. Perceptions of ritualistic purity and pollution, which are at the core of the entire realm of Hindu religious behavior, of social interaction and structure, are not gotten rid of easily, even after they *have* been articulated. Simple psychological models do not work in the sociocultural context, at least not in India: the analysts in New York and Vienna claim that directing a person's mind to hidden packets of affiliation or disaffiliation cures him from the ills supposedly caused by such traumata. But telling an Indian grassroots Muslim, even a Mullah, that the notion of social rank and the grading of man's action within the econiche exploited by him by a hierarchy of pollution and purity is a Hindu remnant to be shunned, does not alter his society's interiorized feelings about these matters. I haven't made any such experiment, but I dare anyone to make it with a view to refute my anthropological-cum-indological hunch: take a random sample of one hundred Muslims from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and ask them who they thought was a better person, all things being equal: one who ate beef, chicken, eggs, or one who was a pure vegetarian. I think the majority of the sample would regard the vegetarian person as superior.

A student of mine, the daughter of an orthodox rabbi in New York, joined Trungpa Rinpoche's 'Tail of the Tiger' in Vermont. She became a vegetarian overnight, and has stayed one ever since (she didn't have to, since her Tibetan guru eats everything that is hot and on a plate); her father was very upset about it—what food did she now eat, since she had left Judaism to become a Buddhist ? When she tried to explain to him that since she did not eat any meat, kosher or traphe, he shook his head and said "this is the wisdom of the nonbelievers (*khokhme ha goyiim*)—God has meant properly prepared meat to be eaten by Jews." Prof. Faruqi at Temple University told me that the Qur'an and the *hadīth* expressly recommend the eating of properly butchered and prepared meat—if this is so, it is an element of the shared tradition of the peoples of the *kitāb*, Jews and Muslims (and, by extension, Christians as well). The positive, preferential evaluation of vegetarian over any kind of nonvegetarian behavior is Indian to the core. In the West it is either Indian influence, or simply faddism. It may well be that the leaders of Pakistan will one day succeed in turning their people's cultural eyes away from India and toward the Middle East, to make it a middle eastern rather than a South Asian country; yet unless and until they succeed in doing so, this Hindu type of value orientation will remain part of the South Asian Muslim operative value system.

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[1] After the late Bhagawan Dass's *magnum opus*, *The Essential Unity of All Religions*, Varanasi, Kashi Vidyapith, 1932, 1939, and later imprints. The book was a vademecum for all lecturers at Indian universities who taught eastern philosophy in English, until about 1940.

[2] "Radhakrishnan and the Other Vedanta" in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, New York, Open Court Publ., 1952.

[3] T.N. Madan, *Family and Kinship: a Study of the Pandits in Rural Kashmir*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1965.

[4] see my "Great Tradition-Little Traditions : an anthropological, view of Eastern Societies" in *Anthropological Background of Adult Education*, Boston Publ. Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, Boston University, 1968.

[5] see "On Mantra" in my *Tantric Tradition*, New York, S. Weiser, 1975.

[6] see my "Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns" in *JAS* 29/2, 1970.

[7] see Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, I, Princeton, University Press, 1966, *passim*.

[8] View the exquisite movie made by G. Obeyesekere (UCSD) *Kataragama: a God for all seasons.* (Univ. of California, 1974).

[9] "Moor" is a generic term for Ceylonese Tamil speaking Muslims.

[10] A heavy frame made of wood, rope, and peacock feathers, propped on the shoulders of the penitent or votary; it varies in weight, from 5 to 70 lbs.—occasionally, a child suffering from sickness might be sitting in the *kāvaḍi* frame. The *kāvaḍi* vow is purely Tamil in origin, and outside Kataragama, only Tamils, (possibly some Andhras and Malayalis) take *kāvaḍi* vows.

[11] E.B. Harper ed., *Religion in South Asia*, Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1964.

[12] The literature on caste is enormous. There is no such thing as an ideologically untinged examination of the systems involved. But all the authors who wrote importantly on caste (Beteille, Dumont, Bailey, Marriott, Mayer, a.o.) seem to agree on these three as the minimal criteria for a caste system.

[13] The disturbing fact is that Muktananda travels with a translator-swami, also dressed in *gerrua* robes. That swami, however, does not translate Muktananda's invariable Nasruddin lecture at all, but, assessing the audience, delivers a slightly modified version of one neo-Vedānta-cum-yoga lecture, with very little relation to Muktananda's talk; I am not sure if Muktananda is aware of this, I think the translator swami wants to avoid telling a Muslim story, or at least telling it at every one of Muktananda's performances. The reason is not far to seek: the translator swami, like every swami lecturing in America, knows that the majority in the audience cannot distinguish between anything that emerges from East of the Hudson—Khalil Gibran, Yoga, Tao, Ekānkar (whatever that means)—they are all about the same to large wide-eyed audiences in America.

[14] The *śāstrārtha* remains the favorite format of theological discussions, regardless of the venure and the locality.

[15] Any kind of religious instruction which is not downright story-telling is called just that, *upadeś* 'instruction'. The term does not refer to any secular teaching.

[16] Ninian Smart, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1964.

[17] Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 74. Prof. Annemarie Schimmel's quote is from her review of the book in *Welt des Islams* n.d.

[18]see my article, *JAS*, Vol. 29/2, referred to earlier; also, my chapters "Hinduism and Modernization" i.e., Robert F. Spencer ed., *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia*, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971, and "The Language of Modern Hinduism: cognitive models and ethnoscientific analysis" in Robert J. Miller, ed. *Religious Ferment in Asia*, Lawrence, Univ. of Kansas Press, 1974.

[19]I have an enormous, ever swelling filing cabinet titled "Renaissance and Lunatic Fringe," in which I collect mail which comes to me at all times, and it keeps coming in unsolicitedly, due to my strategic position between the academic-secular and the monastic. Most of the literature emerges from ashram type organizations in India and abroad. American ashram institutions very soon develop a language and a diction identical with that of their Indian models.

[20]Saghir Ahmad, "Social Stratification in a Punjabi Village," in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (New Series) No. IV, Delhi, 1970. He lists the most important literature in his bibliography, including some unpublished dissertations.

[21]Adrian C. Mayer, *Caste and Kinship in Central India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Univ. of California Press, 1966, p. 34-5.

[22]Or chicken, or ham. I recall a brahmin lad in Seattle who declared, *not* facetiously, that he did not eat beef, but only chicken and HAM-burgers.

[23]For those who are not acquainted with my pizza-effect model: the original pizza was the simple, unleavened hot bread of the Sicilian and Calabrese *contadini* before migration from Southern Italy to the Americas. In other parts of Italy, and even in the cities of the South, eating pizza was what country yokels did. In America, the pizza was converted gradually into a rather different dish—with anchoves, muzzarello, etc., put on top. Around World War I, it returned to Italy and has since become a popular, sophisticated, universally accepted dish. The classical Indian example: Hinduism was out of fashion in the cities, until Vivekananda returned from America where people had taken to it. Or more recently, Satyajit Ray's movies were a flop in India until they returned from the West triumphantly. Same with all the assorted yogis and swamis today.

[24]P. Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 195-6.

[25]Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Chicago, Univ. Press, 1970,

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In order to illuminate the links between popular and learned Hinduism which includes a powerful esoteric segment, the author explains the perennially mystifying problem of *bhakti* vs. *jnana*, pivotally exemplified by Adisamkaracarya to whose order the author also belongs. When the late Pt. Nehru insisted that India's was a composite rather than a Hindu culture, he put his finger on an important fact: than once cannot sensibly and sensitively talk about Hindu action without heeding the interface between Hinduism and Islam which has indeed become part of modern Hinduism, as it is indeed for South Asian Islam.

Agehananda Bharati, a native of Vienna, Austria, now U. S. citizen, is a monk in the Dasanami Sannyasi Order of Samkaracarya and professor of anthropology at Syracuse University, U.S.A. He was Reader in Philosophy at Banaras Hindu University from 1951-54, Visiting Professor of Indian Religions at the Mahamukuta Royal Buddhist Academy in Bangkok and at the Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto in 1955 and 1956, Research Associate at the Far Eastern Institute of the University of Washington in Seattle from 1957 to 1961, and has been on the faculty of Syracuse University in the State of New York since 1961, where he served as departmental head from 1970-1977. He is a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain, a fellow of the American Anthropological Association, member of the Association for Asian Studies and the American Oriental Society. Among his close to five-hundred publications in various languages and on four continents, some of the most important are his autobiography. *The Ochre Robe* (latest edition Ross-Erikson, Santa Barbara, Cal., USA, 1980), *The Tantric Tradition* (London, 1969, New York, 1970 and 1975), *Asians in East Africa: Jayhind and Uhuru* (Nelson Hall Publ., Chicago, 1972), *The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism* (Ross Erikson, Santa Barbara, 1976 and Vikas, Delhi, 1977). and the entry on Monasticism in the new *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. XII, 1974).